

SABBATH MORNING READINGS.

THE BOOKS OF JOSHUA AND JUDGES.

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THE VALLEY OF AJALON.

JOSHUA 8. 12



SABBATH MORNING READINGS

ON THE

OLD TESTAMENT.

BY

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The Books of Joshua and Judges.

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JOSHUA AND JUDGES.

THESE two books occupy a very important place in the sacred Canon. The former contains the history of the theocracy under Joshua, once the servant, and latterly the successor of Moses. It narrates the conquest of Canaan and its distribution among the tribes. But interspersed with its historic incidents, and ever more rising to the surface from the under-currents of living and eternal truth, we discover the faithfulness, and mercy, and loving-kindness of God, and continuous evidence that the great work begun in Egypt amid stupendous miracles was carried on under a ceaseless Divine superintendence.

The Book of Judges, which is, in a great measure, the complement of that of Joshua, is replete with

instructive doctrinal and moral truths, bearing especially on national and social life. It traces the defection of the Children of Israel, lays open the disasters that arose from the want of government and authority, and the certainty of penalty pursuing and overtaking crime. The comments in this volume will be found plain and useful—the product of reading, and the results rather than the processes of thought. They have proved instructive to a very large congregation, and it is the author's prayer that, by the blessing of God, they may be as useful to the large body of readers they now reach.

October, 1857.

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SABBATH MORNING READINGS

ON THE

of

PREFACE.

IN commencing another Book of the Old Testament, the author proposes to introduce two or three improvements.

It has been matter of complaint that a monthly number frequently ends in the middle of a subject, and thus interrupts alike the interest of the reader and the continuity of the narrative or comment.

In order to obviate this, each chapter will have its distinctive heading, and each number, whether it embrace one subject or two, will be complete in itself.

The author will also introduce such topographical and illustrative extracts as are calculated to cast light and freshness on the very interesting historical books of which Joshua is the first.

It has been the aim of the writer, and he trusts in some measure his attainment, to present popular and almost conversational reflections on the various chapters and incidents in the Pentateuch, now completed

in five volumes. Those who desire to study learned and elaborate critical disquisitions must refer to other sources. But those who wish to have the results of reading rather than the processes through which these results are reached, will find in these volumes all they require. Young persons especially, teachers in schools and families, scripture readers and missionaries, cannot but derive useful instruction easily accessible amidst labours that leave little time even where there is the talent for hard, learned, and laborious study.

APPOINTMENT OF JOSHUA AS LEADER.

SCRIPTURE DIVISIONS. A SOLDIER SUCCEEDS MOSES. NAME OF
JOSHUA IN GREEK. PIETY AND COURAGE.

BUSH makes the following useful remarks introductory to this book :—

“That portion of the Old Testament which contains the history of the affairs of the Jewish nation, from the death of Moses to its conquest by the Chaldeans, is comprised in the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. These, in the Hebrew classification, are termed the *Former Prophets*. The title *Prophets* is given them on the ground of the general belief, that they were written under the prompting of a Divine impulse; and the epithet *Former* is applied in reference to the place which they occupy in the Sacred Canon, as preceding the books of the *Latter Prophets*, an appellation bestowed upon those whose character is more strictly *prophetic*, viz., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets. The records of the nation from the time of the exile and the return thence, down to the close of the Persian empire, are contained in the books of Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah, which the Hebrews attach to that part of the canon called the *Hagiographa*, in which are included also the books of Ruth and Chronicles. How ancient this division was, we cannot positively affirm; but it was

current at least as early as the time of Jerome and the later Talmudists.

"The Divine Spirit, who sees the end from the beginning, may have had in view an ultimate use of the written records of his servants, which governed, unknown to them, their form and structure from their very inception; and a song of triumph chanted over a slain or routed foe, the memoir of a distinguished deliverer, the narrative of a siege in some 'war of the Lord,' the legend of a miracle, the inscription on a pillar, or the certificate of a sale, may have been as truly suggested, overruled, and preserved by the Spirit of inspiration, as any precept of the decalogue, or any vision of a prophet. Whatever God sees fit to *authenticate*, by adopting into His word, is to be considered as having virtually the stamp of inspiration."

The whole book is naturally divided into four grand sections, viz:—

"PART I.—*The Entrance of the Israelites into Canaan.*

- "1. The appointment of Joshua as leader of Israel, ch. i.
- "2. The spies sent out to view the land, ch. ii.
- "3. The miraculous passage of the Jordan, ch. i. 10—18, ch. ii. 4.
- "4. The renewal of the covenant, ch. v. 1—13.

"PART II.—*The Victories of the Israelites under Joshua.*

- "1. The conquest of Jericho, ch. vi.
- "2. The capture of Ai, ch. vii. 8.
- "3. Fraud of the Gibeonites—conquest of the five kings—miracle of the sun's standing still, ch. ix. 10.
- "4. Conquest of Canaan completed, ch. xi.
- "5. Recapitulation of the conquests of Israel, ch. xii. 13.

"PART III.—*Division of the Country.*

- "1. Inheritance of the two tribes and a-half, ch. xiii.
- "2. General division of Canaan, ch. xiv.

- " 3. Inheritance of Caleb, ch. xiv. 15.
- " 4. Lot of Judah, ch. xv.
- " 5. Lot of Joseph, ch. xvi. 17.
- " 6. The Tabernacle set up, ch. xviii.
- " 7. Lot of Benjamin and the remaining tribes, ch. xviii. 19.
- " 8. Inheritance of Joshua, ch. xix.
- " 9. Cities of refuge and Levitical cities, ch. xx. xxi.

" PART IV.—*The last Exhortations and Death of Joshua.*

- " 1. The assembling of the people and first address of Joshua, ch. xxiii.
- " 2. The tribes again assembled and addressed by Joshua, ch. xxiv.
- " 3. The death and burial of Joshua, ch. xxiv.
- " 4. The death and burial of Eleazar, ch. xxiv."

The first five Books of the Old Testament Scriptures, the illustration of which we have finished in the course of our successive Sabbath Morning Readings, are generally known by the name of the Pentateuch, or the five works; being descriptive of the important facts and transactions which are therein written. Then the Bible is divided next into what are called the former prophets and the latter prophets—expressions that you will frequently find in the writings of those who comment on the Scriptures, still oftener in the references of the Jews to them at this day. The former prophets consist of Joshua, and of Samuel, and of Kings, and of Chronicles; the latter prophets consist of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and Micah, and Jonah, onward to Malachi. These last, known by the name of the latter prophets, you will find, in writings on divinity, are divided into what are called the greater and the lesser prophets; the greater being Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel; and

the lesser being Micah, and Joel, and Jonah, ending with Malachi: numbering twelve altogether. The whole Old Testament Scripture was known among the Jews by the name, in which indeed it is referred to in the New Testament, Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets; Moses being used briefly to comprehend both the Pentateuch and the former prophets; the Psalms, to comprehend the Book of Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, and the Psalms of David; and the prophets, comprehending both the greater and the lesser, as contained at the close of the Old Testament Scripture.

This Book of Joshua, which name means literally "The salvation of God," is written in the Hebrew Yehoshua.

It is necessary that you should understand that this Joshua or Yehoshua, was called in the Greek, ever anxious in its more musical dialect to soften and subdue what was thought the harshness of the Hebrew, Jesus. Hence you will find in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Joshua referred to under that very name; a reference which has sometimes puzzled the superficial reader, when a moment's reflection would have saved all the necessity of doubting on the matter. Paul says, "For if Jesus could have given them rest." Now the Jesus he alludes to is Joshua, not our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. You will find the very same expression used in the Acts of the Apostles, where Joshua is alluded to also under the name of Jesus. It is a pity that our translators did not render the word "Joshua" in the New Testament, just as they have done the Hebrew into Joshua in the Old; and thus the possible incidental, though not frequent, mistake would have been avoided.

“In Numbers xiii. 16, we are informed that ‘Moses called Oshea the son of Nun, Jehoshua,’ where the original is in the first instance *וְיֵהוֹשֻׁעַ* *hoshëa*, the same name with that of the Prophet Hosea, and in the second *וְיֵהוֹשֻׁעַ* *yehoshua*, having the first letter of ‘Jehovah’ (*יהוה*) appended. The first of these the Greek of the Septuagint represents by *Αουη*, *Ausë*, the other by *Ιησου*, *Jesus*. The Hebrew root of the name has the import of *salvation*, and from this the sense of *Saviour* has been transferred into the Greek *Ιησους*, *Jesus*. In Neh. viii. 17, we have still another form; *וְיֵשׁוּעַ* *yeshua*, *Jeshua*, where the Gr. preserves the usual form *Ιησους*, *Jesus*. It was doubtless from this current usage of the Septuagint that the New Testament writers have in two instances applied to Joshua the name of the Saviour, of whom he was undoubtedly an eminent type. The first is Acts vii. 45, ‘Which also our fathers, that came after, brought in with *Jesus*,’ i. e. Joshua. The other is Heb. iv. 8, ‘For if *Jesus* (Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.’ This change of names, in the case of various Scripture personages, appears to have been governed by a change of relations, either to God or to man, as in the case of Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Daniel, Paul, and others.”—*Bush*.

Moses died; partly as a chastisement to himself, partly as a solemn act of retribution in the sight of all Israel for his offence at the waters of Meribah; proving thereby that sin in the greatest saint is sin; and that, publicly committed, it will meet with public retribution in some shape. When Moses died, Joshua was appointed to carry the Tribes across the Jordan, and to take possession of that land overflowing with milk

and honey, which Moses saw from Pisgah, but was not permitted, in retribution, to enter.

It strikes one first to ask Why did God use all the cumbrous process recorded in successive chapters in this Book? Why did he not at once annihilate the Canaanites; at once carry Joshua and his millions behind him at one step across the Jordan, and into the land of promise, and take quiet possession of it? One reason is that God treats men as rational, intelligent, responsible agents, to be guided, encouraged, and taught; not to be driven or impelled like a locomotive placed upon a groove, and subject to an action it neither understands nor can resist. And in the second place, God has written these things, says the apostle, "as ensamples to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come." If there had been no such history as that of Joshua, no such precedent as the facts that evolve in that history, I do not see how the Christian minister or the Christian people could have justified a nation or a country, even on the right side or in a right cause, in going to war. But you find here, what to my mind is unanswerable, that God selects for the successor of the minister of peace, a general, a soldier, a commander-in-chief; appoints him to conduct his hosts like an army, to unsheath the sword when justice demanded it, and to lead his men into battle, to sieges, by perils, sufferings, sacrifices, in those sieges when duty, circumstances, and providence, seemed to originate it. It does, therefore, seem to me that we have in this history precedent, first of all, for the lawfulness of war,—that terrible thing, in itself wicked thing,—in some circumstances; and we have, secondly, laws laid down that should

guide our generals and our soldiers, when compelled in obedience to duty to fulfil that stern and terrible mission, which so many of our countrymen, at so tremendous sacrifices, have been called on lately to fulfil.

Now in reading this chapter we find that God first of all promises to be with Joshua, and why? Because Joshua was engaged as a general in leading his troops against a people that were guilty, and in the prosecution of a cause allied to truth, and justice, and right. And if God be now what he was then, we need not doubt that in some way, even when we cannot see it, he may be fulfilling his promise in our case. God will be with us we believe, as often as we are engaged in a just, and a right, and a proper cause and war. He was with Joshua, not because of Joshua's personal excellences, but because of Joshua's mission and duty to fulfil the great laws that God had laid upon him.

And in the second place, you will notice that though Joshua was a soldier, he was neither exempt from nor ashamed to be found reading, studying, learning God's holy Word. For what do we find? "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth : thou shalt meditate therein day and night."

"The same phrase occurs but once elsewhere in the Scriptures, Isaiah lix. 21. 'As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord. My spirit that is upon thee and my words which I have put in thy mouth, *shall not depart out of thy mouth*, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever ;" where it is implied that the covenant promise should be deemed so precious, that it should be a

perpetual theme of meditation and discourse; that it should constantly dwell on the tongues of those interested in it. It is moreover implied, in this charge to Joshua, that he was not only to make the book of the law the subject of assiduous study for his own personal benefit, but also to make it the sole rule and standard of all his public and official proceedings; he was to issue orders and pronounce judgments according to its precepts, and that too without exception or reserve—he must ‘do according to *all* that is written therein.’ Though appointed to the rank of supreme head and magistrate of the nation, he was not to consider himself elevated in the slightest degree above the authority of the Divine law, or the necessity of consulting it; nor should any Christian magistrate at this day consider himself at liberty to dispense with the light which beams from the word of God, in regard to the great matters of his duty.”—*Bush*.

In the camp, in the tent, in the hospital, in the field, this book shall be a life, an inspiration, a presence, a power. And what was required in Joshua, when miracles paved his path, and the pillar of fire shone upon his goings, is no less dutiful and necessary now. And it will be proved, nay, it has been proved, in the high places of the field, that he that loves his Bible, fears his God, seeks guidance from that blessed lamp to his feet and light to his path; will be the very first to lead the forlorn hope, and the last to leave the scene of peril, of conflict, and of death. We have this proved in all past history. It is not true, as scoffing men say, it is not true, as secular and thoughtless men think, that piety makes cowards, that religion prevents men being good soldiers; or,

being soldiers, unnerves the arm and disturbs the heart ; it is all the very opposite. Read some of those beautiful letters from the Crimea that have appeared in the public prints, and you will see how completely it has been evinced, in the most unaffected and the most unostentatious manner, that the soldier that fears his God is not the least devoted in loyalty to his Queen, in love to his country, in faithfulness to his colours ; and it has yet to be proved, though people will not believe it, that religion enables a man to sweep a crossing, or to sway a sceptre, or to wield a sword, with a grace, an energy, and a consistency, that nothing else upon earth can inspire.

THE UNFAILING PRESENCE.

“I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”—JOSHUA i. 5.

OFTEN had Israel forsaken God : never has he, from the first beginning of his dealings with that strange and intractable race, forgotten or forsaken them. These words, which were addressed to Joshua, are more fully stated in the previous book, in Deuteronomy xxxi. 6. “Be strong, and of a good courage, fear not nor be afraid of them ; for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee ; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” And to show that this promise was not peculiar to an age, or restricted to an individual, however exalted or worthy he was, we find it prolonged along the ages of the world, and repeated with increased emphasis and expressiveness in the Epistle to the Hebrews, xiii. 5, where, speaking to Christians in general, of every name, and age, and century, and country, Paul quotes the promise of God, as then, and in reference to these, immutably true : “Let your conversation be without covetousness ; and be content with such things as ye have ; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” So that we see the promise was not confined to an age, or restricted to an individual ; but is the common property of Christendom, and may be pleaded, and the stress of our hopes laid upon it, and inspira-

tion to our souls drawn from it, now and always. I wish I could express to you the condensed thought and remarkable language in that simple and seemingly naked promise,—“I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” It is literally, translated word for word from the original, “I will not never leave thee; no, never, never forsake thee.” Our translation is excessively meagre, and not at all equal to the language of the original. The original is intensely expressive, and evidently conveys how earnest God is in giving expression to that promise, and how desirous he is that we should draw from it the rich and abiding consolation that it contains. “I will not never leave thee; no, never, never forsake thee.” It is one of the very richest promises contained in the whole Word of God. It is not the expression of what God will do; it is rather a declaration that there is nothing that he will not do. It is not the pledge of his bestowing some great and precious gift; but it is the pledge of a perpetual, near, dear, and ceaseless presence of himself. It is not the promise of the stream, but the possession of the fountain. It is a pledge that he will supply from the riches of his goodness, from the resources of his strength, from the stores of his wisdom, all that you can need, desire, or demand, in the worst of circumstances, always and anywhere in the history of his church and people in this present world. Can there be a better warrant for casting all our care upon him? Is it true, that the humblest Christian can say, “God will never leave me; no, never, never forsake me?” If not applicable to the least Christian upon earth, it is not applicable to any. It is not a promise of something to the great, or the

mature saint ; but to every one that calls upon the name of Christ, and looks for everlasting joy through his mediation, and seeks in all his ways to honour and acknowledge God as his God. In this promise, however, there is no pledge that the Christian, with whom God is to be, shall never be in trouble or tribulation. Such a state would be incompatible with what is often stated in the Scriptures. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." And again, "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is a promise of God's presence with you in trouble, and in spite of trouble, and through trouble ; till you are emancipated from it, purified, and made fit for the kingdom of heaven. In the case of the Christian still, as of old, your fig tree may not blossom, there may be no fruit on your vine, the labour of your olive may fail, your flock may be cut off from the fold ; but God will be present when all these are taken away, and his promise will be as applicable, and real, and as rich in consolation, "I will never leave thee ; I will never forsake thee." And, therefore, like the prophet of old, you may rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of your salvation. You may be in the midst of trouble, you may have no taper on earth shining below to cheer you, and no star sparkling in the sky above you, and no spot in the horizon round, bright with promise ; yet then and there this promise may be pleaded, its sweetness may be tasted by you, and from it alone you may draw strength, inspiration, encouragement, that will enable you, by the blessing of Him that gave it, to be more than conquerors through him that loved you. You may be in affliction, in sorrow, in bitterness of heart ; but you never can be anywhere

where God is not with you. In the depths, on the heights, on the broad sea, in strange and distant lands : "I will never leave thee ; I will never forsake thee." In all time of your wealth, in all time of your tribulation, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment : "I will not never leave thee ; I will no never, never, forsake thee." Forsake you who may, God will not ; forget you who please, he will not. He is the faithful and the promise-keeping God ; and whether we taste it or not, if we be Christians it is true ; whether we enjoy its sweetness or not, his presence is there ; for he abideth in us. You may be exposed to great persecutions ; you may be in danger of bonds, imprisonment, and death ; yet God will not leave you, he will not forsake you. You may be so oppressed and so bewildered that you will exclaim in the bitterness of your heart, "God hath forgotten me,-and my God hath forsaken me ;" but he will still be with you ; he will bring into your hearts the joyous rebuke of the scepticism that doubts his word, by appealing in the tenderest and most touching language ; "Can a mother forget her infant, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb ? So will not God forget thee. I have engraven thee upon the palms of my hands ; I will never leave thee ; I will no never, never, forsake thee." All that man loves may forsake him ; all that man dreads may overtake him ; but it is true, for God hath said it, "I will never leave thee ; I will never forsake thee." You may be plunged in the midst of severe spiritual temptations. Satan always assails the holiest ; just as the wasp fastens on the ripest fruit, Satan is sure to attack the maturest and the best of Christians. If you were without those

temptations, you would be without humanity ; you would be a stranger to the experience of God's people. Ambition, covetousness, pride, the lust of the eye, the love of this present world—all the passions within us that have been generated by the Fall, that have been let loose, and are inspired by evil from beneath, may tempt you to do wrongly, urge you to what is forbidden ; but in the midst of all, and in spite of all, recollect : “There hath no temptation overtaken you, even the worst, but such as is common to man ; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation make a way of escape, so that ye may be able to bear it.” That is, should the worst temptation assail you ; should your passions clamour for indulgence ; yet the ordeal is what others have gone through ; the apostle tells you it is common to man ; and the promise of your God is that he will not leave you, that he will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able : but will perfect his strength in your weakness, and make his grace sufficient for you. He sees you ; he knows your trial ; he has gauged your strength ; he has committed himself to this glorious promise : “Even then, and in such trials, forsake you who may, I will never leave you ; I will never forsake you.” You may be exposed to very bitter and painful bereavements ; you may have lost those you love ; you may anticipate worse than has yet happened ; but if God be with his people, and not with them in the bulk, but with each individually, as closely, as truly, as if that individual and God were the only twain in the whole universe,—then those you lost were taken

when it was best that they should be. It was not accident, for God was there ; it was not chance, for he suffers not the sparrow to fall to the ground without his fatherly permission ; and therefore comfort one another with this thought ; "I will not leave you orphans. Let not your hearts be troubled. I will never leave thee ; I will never forsake thee."

And just think who is here with us. Who is it who never leaves us ; who never forsakes us ? It is God. And what has he ? Omnipotent power to help, to sustain, to carry us through every trial, to make us conquerors in every conflict, and to bring us safely, and without any loss, to glory. If God had wisdom to see what we need, but not power to direct us, where direction is not in man's power, it would be of no avail. Or if God had love to pity us, but no power to protect us, in vain would his presence be with us. But this presence is the presence of love that pities, of wisdom that sees, of omniscience that minutely and ceaselessly inspects, and of power to keep us from falling, and to carry us through every trial, until at last grace is lost in glory. His love inspires his wisdom to direct us, his power to protect us ; and that love that he feels to us, inspiring that power which is omnipotence and that wisdom which is infinite, makes all things, not some things, work, and work together ; that is, in harmony, and work beneficently, that is, for good, to them that love him, and are the called according to his purpose. The bitterest cup that he presents to you, his love has mingled. The darkest cloud that overshadows your horizon is big with benedictions. All things that betide you

are from him, superintended by him, arranged, directed, and controlled, and made conducive to your good and to his glory.

What a favoured person, then, is that Christian who feels that God,—not only feels, but who is sure that God is with him, whether he feels it or not. The heaviest duties become light; the most arduous sacrifices become easy, when Divine strength is made perfect in weakness, and almighty grace is also sufficient for us. And, if God be with us; and if we are walking according to his word, as Enoch and Noah walked with God, and were comforted; then we need not fear what man can do; we need not be troubled by the things that are coming on the earth; we walk as sons in the sunshine of a Father's countenance, under the protecting and the watchful care of one who never leaves us, who never forsakes us. And we are sure, therefore, that taking his word as the lamp to our feet and the light to our path, and pleading his promise in prayer at his footstool continually, we shall never, never, be forsaken. In all our ways let us take our bearings not from the meteor opinions of mankind, but from the fixed lights in the firmament of the heaven; and walking thus we shall walk surely.

Let us then, as an inference from all we have said, ever make known our wants to God in prayer; ever plead his promise, and ask him to make it actual and real in our happy and rejoicing experience. The promise is given that it may be pleaded in prayer. He says, "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee." You pray, "O Lord, never leave me; never forsake me." And if in the past we are conscious that

an unseen hand often turned us to the right when we were going to the left; that an unseen power often impelled us where we would not, and kept us from where we would; if, in taking a retrospect of our past life, we see that there depended apparently on the tiniest of incidents stupendous results; that the turning of a corner at some particular course of life would have altered our whole course, character, and probably eternity itself; can we fail to see that God has been with us; can we doubt that he has not forsaken us; can we hesitate to believe that he who has been with us in the past will be with us in the future? And shall we refuse, in the words of David, to say, "Come, all ye that fear God; and I will tell you what he has done for my soul." Do not judge of the presence of God by the heat of the trial through which you are passing; but judge of the trial by the promise; "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee." Do not look at God in the light of your afflictions; for if you do so, he will seem to you shrouded in clouds, in tempests, and in wrath; reverse the process, and look at your afflictions in the light of the countenance of God your Father, and the darkest ones will glow with a celestial brightness; and over all that betides you in your saddest and most sorrowful hours, you will see the rainbow, the memorial of his own pledge, the standing mark of the fulfilment of his own promise; "I will never leave; no, I will never, never, forsake thee."

THE SPIES.

THE MISSION OF THE ISRAELITES. SIEGE OF JERICHO. DIVINE HELP AND HUMAN MEANS. RAHAB. EXPLANATION OF HER CHARACTER. KING OF JERICHO HEARS OF THE SPIES. CONDUCT OF RAHAB. INCONSISTENCY. RAHAB'S COVENANT WITH THE SPIES. THE SCARLET ROPE.

You will recollect the duty enjoined on the Israelites, which they were commanded to pursue as one of the great ends of their mission by God himself—namely, to exterminate from the land of Palestine all the Canaanites; not as the expression of their human revenge, but as a judicial infliction by a holy God, who used the Israelites to punish a guilty nation for its crimes, its aggravated and continued crimes against heaven and earth. And among the very first places that they would have to encompass and lay siege to was Jericho, a frontier town of great strength, formidable ramparts, battlements, and intrenchments; and against which they expected, in the ordinary way in which they had acted throughout, God bestowing miracles only where means were ineffectual, that they would have to spend many days in the trenches, in seeking to vanquish and level with the ground a guilty and obstructing capital. The modern Jericho, now called *Rihah*, is a miserable village of about fifty dwellings and two hundred inhabitants; but according to the most intelligent travellers, it does

not occupy the site of the ancient city. The latter is believed to have stood at least four miles nearer Jerusalem, at the very foot of the mountains, although it is admitted to be impossible distinctly to identify it. The modern Jericho is thus described by Professor Robinson (*Trav.*, Vol. II., p. 279 :) " We now returned through the village which bears the Arabic name of *Eriha*, or, as it is more commonly pronounced, *Riha*, a degenerate shoot both in name and character of the ancient Jericho. Situated in the midst of this vast plain, it reminded me much of an Egyptian village. The plain is rich and susceptible of easy tillage and abundant irrigation, with a climate to produce anything. Yet it lies almost desert; and the village is the most miserable and filthy that we saw in Palestine. The houses or hovels are merely four walls of stones taken from ancient ruins and loosely thrown together, with flat roofs of cornstalks or brushwood spread over with gravel. They stand quite irregularly, and with large intervals; and each has around it a yard enclosed by a hedge of the dry thorny boughs of the Nubk. In many of these yards are open sheds with similar roofs; and the flocks and herds are brought into them at night, and render them filthy in the extreme. A similar but stronger hedge of Nubk branches surrounds the whole village, forming an almost impenetrable barrier. The few gardens round about seemed to contain nothing but tobacco and cucumbers. One single solitary palm now timidly rears its head, where once stood the renowned 'City of Palm-trees.' Not an article of provision was to be bought here, except new wheat, unground." The plain upon which Jericho stood is very extensive, and as

numerous ruins are strewed over at a greater or less distance from the fountain by which it was distinguished, it is probable that in consequence of the malediction denounced against him who should rebuild its gates, the location was subsequently changed, and perhaps more than once. Though they knew that God was with them, and that success was certain, they did not on that account forbear to use those means that the occasion seemed to require, and which we use still in similar circumstances, and in pursuit of similar objects. They might have argued, had they been Antinomians, "God will do all, because he has promised it, let us lie down, and be still." But no; they said, "God will do all which is his province; therefore let us do our duty, which is our province." God engaging to do what is divine does not supersede man's obligation to do what is human. Nay, God's doing successfully is employed by the sacred penmen, not as a dissuasive to our doing anything, but as a reason for our doing everything. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Why? Because all depends upon yourself? That would be human logic. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." Now how remarkable is this; that the very reason which we, in our unenlightened state, would quote for doing nothing, is the reason assigned by an apostle as the greatest reason for man doing everything that man can do. So here, the first thing that the Israelites did, knowing that Jericho was to fall, but that it was their duty to besiege it, was to send out two men in whom they had confidence; men of good sense, full of energy,

valour; and in whom they had full confidence; to go and search out what was the height of the walls, what was the depth of the fosse, how many men it was likely to hold; how many sabres could be drawn in its defence; and what points there were from which they could assail it with the greatest chance of success; and to make any other inquiries that would facilitate the operations of the army under Joshua, their anointed and appointed commander.

These two set out, and came first to the house of a harlot, of the name of Rahab; whose house was built upon the walls; almost upon the battlements; and seeing her, and going in, they made inquiry as to the state of the citadel, its fortifications, the number of men that could defend it; and in fact about everything that it was necessary to know, or gather information upon. Now some have thought that this woman, into whose house they entered upon this occasion, was then really what she is here called. But this is very doubtful. Some say that the word translated "harlot" here ought to be translated "inn keeper;" and it is very remarkable that the Hebrew word so translated does also mean a lodging-house keeper or an inn keeper. But I do not think that this really meets the difficulty. Inns belong to an advanced state of civilization, and were then little known. Volney says, "There are no *inns* any where; but the cities, and commonly the villages, have a large building called a *khan* or *caravanserai*, which serves as an asylum for all travellers. These houses of reception are always built without the precincts of towns, and consist of four wings round a square court, which serves, by way of inclosure, for the beasts of burden. The lodgings are cells, where you find

nothing but bare walls, dust, and sometimes scorpions. The keeper of this khan gives the traveller the key and a mat; and he himself provides the rest. He must therefore carry with him his bed, his kitchen utensils; and even his provisions; for frequently *not even bread* is to be found in the villages."

It is always desirable to take Scripture just as it stands, rather than to try to avoid a difficulty, as we shall see, by having recourse to a strange or an unwonted explanation. It seems a practice in Scripture, a practice frequently occurring in ordinary life, of calling a person by what he was, after he has changed his calling the name is still retained. Thus "Matthew the Publican" is the name given to St. Matthew throughout the Gospels, long after he had renounced the receipt of customs, and become an apostle; the name of his profession, which he once exercised, being appended to him after he has entered upon another; "Simon the tanner," is one of many other instances. I do not know that the name is applied; but "Peter the fisherman" would be appropriate, according to Scripture usage, after Peter had ceased to be a fisherman. Now she might have been what she is here designated; but she had certainly long ceased to be so. And as often a bad deed cleaves to one in this world when a good one is forgotten; the shadow and the sound of the bad is cherished and kept up, when the recollection of a good and a noble act is too often merged and ignored.

The spies came to her; for she was now, as will be seen by the perusal of the chapter, clearly a Christian, or a believer in the God of Israel, and lodged there, still in pursuit of information. A message

was immediately conveyed to the king of Jericho by those whose business it was to watch, saying, "There came in hither to-night men of the children of Israel, to search out the country;" which was true, but was only on their part a guess. Well, the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "At once bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house; for they be come to search out all the country. And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus." Now why did she take them, and hide them? She was a native of that country, a citizen of that city; but she had cast in her lot with the followers of the living and the true God, and Israel had become her country, Israel's God her God; Israel's people her people; and abjuring the land that she was born in, not because she was a traitress, but because it was an abandoned, corrupt, and depraved place; and cleaving to a holier people, and the true and living God; she made Israel's people her people, entertained the spies, sheltered them from peril, and contributed to the downfall of that capital in which she herself had so long lived.

When they asked her, she said to them, "There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were." Now so far, that was true; she could not state, probably, the very place from which they came; though it seems excessively like an evasion. But the next statement is positively untrue; and here it is difficult, on the supposition that she was a believer in the true God; as we should say a real Christian, to vindicate her conduct in telling what was a deliberate falsehood. She said, "It came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the

men went out; whither the men went, I wot not;”—of course she did not know where they went, because they did not go at all; “pursue after them quickly, for ye shall overtake them.” But she had really brought them up to the roof of her house, and hid them under stalks of flax, which she had laid in order to dry upon the roof. Now you observe, the difficulty lies here. The apostle Paul quotes Rahab as an instance of faith, as a Christian; the apostle James also quotes her as one justified in the sight of God; and in more than one instance, she is referred to as a believer. The difficulty is how to reconcile the apostolic verdict that she was a Christian with the obvious fact that she told a deliberate and premeditated falsehood. I can only give you the solutions that have been proposed. The first is this. We know quite well, that when a man’s heart has been changed and his mind enlightened, it takes a long time to get rid of elements that have become almost a second nature, inveterate, and except by grace, invincible. It is notorious that among the Canaanites, to which she belonged, lying was not the exceptional, but the usual thing; as is the case very much, I believe, with the Hindoos still, and with some Eastern nations, and with the modern Greeks. I state this, and it has been stated by others, not to dilute the sin; but merely to show that you must not expect one whose mind has become enlightened, whose heart has become renewed, to get rid of all his besetting sins in a day, in a week, or immediately. We know how difficult it is to get rid of habits that have become like a second nature; how difficult it is to turn the whole current of one’s thoughts and sympathies; and whilst the Spirit of

God will enable you to do so, and there is no change of heart unless you are enabled to do so, yet we must be prepared to find that the convert of yesterday will not get rid to day of all the inveterate habits of a lifetime, or be able always and everywhere to conquer those sins that have most easily beset him. Now, may it not be, that this was a remaining inveterate sin of Rahab, a sin that even after she had professed her belief in the living and true God, and cast in her lot with his people, still broke out. Not that she herself, probably, approved of it when she reflected, but the reverse; but that her zeal and enthusiasm tempted her, sinfully,—no doubt, sinfully, to act in the way she did.

“She said the spies had left her house when they were still in it. How is this to be reconciled with the workings of a heart made right in the sight of God? The question is certainly one of no easy solution; but in forming a judgment of her conduct, it is fair that Rahab should have the benefit of every extenuating circumstance that can be adduced in her favour; and such are the following:—

“Having been born and brought up among the depraved Canaanites, she had probably never been taught the evil of lying, and least of all where an apparently good end was to be answered by it. From the uniform testimony of travellers and missionaries, it is evident that among all heathen nations, particularly those of the East, lying ever has been, and still is, a practice of universal prevalence, and of the criminality of which they have scarcely any sense. So weak is the feeling of obligation, as to the observance of strict veracity, that even apparently sincere converts have the greatest difficulty in freeing themselves from

the habit of equivocation, and need to be perpetually admonished on that score. (See Read's *Christian Brahmun*.) What wonder, then, that Rahab, a poor, ignorant, heathen woman, upon whose mind the light of a saving knowledge had just begun to dawn, should have prevaricated in the trying circumstances in which she was placed? How much allowance precisely is to be made for her on this ground *we* may not know, but *God* does. To him we may leave it. That it should go *somewhat* in abatement of her guilt, if guilty she were, we have no doubt.

"Apart from the above consideration, it was truly a difficult problem to be solved, how she should, under the circumstances, *act according to her faith*. She fully believed that what the spies had told her was true. She says not, 'I fear,' or 'I believe,' but '*I know*, that the Lord hath given you the land.' She was satisfied that it was in vain to fight against God, and what could she do? If she had either told the truth or remained silent, she had betrayed the spies; but if she believed them sent of God, could she have done this without sin? She knew, moreover, very well, that if these two spies were put to death, it would make no difference whatever as to the issue of the contest. The whole city and its inhabitants would at any rate be destroyed. To what purpose then would it be to deliver up the spies? It would not save one single life; it would only be to continue fighting against God, and to bring on herself and her family that destruction which it was now in her power to avert. By concealing the spies, she could in fact injure nobody, whereas by giving them up, she would sacrifice not them only, but also herself and her family.

Was there, then, any other conceivable mode by which she could act *according to her faith*, than by practising an imposition upon the king's officers?

"By the fact of her exercising a firm faith in the Divine testimony, she did *virtually* throw herself upon the side of Israel, and unite her interests with theirs. Henceforth *their* enemies were *hers*."—*Bush*.

Another explanation has been given of it; and I wish you to weigh each, and to take what you think the most plausible. It is this. In war, there are what are called tactics; not always, apparently to Christian minds, very honest. For instance, in the siege of Sebastopol, you must have noticed that while the main force was directed against one great citadel, believing it to be the key of the fortress, there was a series of feints, as they are called, or attempts to attack other parts of the fortress; not expected to be successful, but designed to make the enemy believe that they were going to attack this part, and that he must therefore send off men from the Malakhoff, in order to defend another point; so that the main body might the more successfully attack and become masters of the key of the whole fortress. It was an attempt to make Gortschakoff believe that we meant to make our attack here when we really and truly meant to make it there. Thus Elisha deceived the Syrian army, and led them blinded from Dothan to Samaria. These are what are called the stratagems or tactics of war. Now it has been argued by some who have endeavoured to solve the difficulty that presents itself in the case of Rahab, that she acted just like a tactician or a strategist in war; and tried to make them believe that one thing was the fact, when another thing, that she

concealed for the sake of the ultimate result, was the real truth. Whether this will justify her conduct or not, it remains with you to determine. I must confess that there are great difficulties in both ; the former seems to me the most reasonable. At all events, from Rahab to the ripest Christian of to-day, if we know our own hearts as we should, we shall be constrained to confess, "If we say," as well as Rahab, "that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

We then find a covenant entered into between Rahab and the spies, or the Israelites. It was this. She said, "I know that Jehovah hath given you the land;" and she said too, that she knew that the fear of them was everywhere ; and that "the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." She was a believer in the one living and true God. Well now, she made a condition ; she said, "of course my safety is secure in consequence of my services ;" but, like a true Christian, she would not be satisfied with her own safety without trying to secure the safety of them that were near and dear to her. So a true Christian will not be satisfied with his own salvation ; but he will try also to secure the salvation of all with whom he is connected. And she therefore said, "Now, therefore, I pray unto you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token, or pledge, that you will do so ; namely, that you will save the life of my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." This was a very fair stipulation. The men answered

at once, and said, "Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business;" that is to say, "We will pledge our lives to you that we will do so, if you are faithful to us." "And it shall be, therefore, when the Lord hath given us this land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee." "Then she let them down in the dark;" not she alone, but no doubt those that were with her; because in Scripture a person is said to do a thing often when he does it by the aid or through the means of others;—"she let them down by a cord," or rope, as it might be properly rendered, "through the window, for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall;" or battlement that surrounded the town. "And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned; and afterward may ye go your way. And the men said unto her, we will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear;" that is, "As far as we are concerned, we will keep the oath, even if we should risk our own lives in our attempt to do so. And when we come into the land, to enable us to fulfil our promise to you, you must make the following arrangements; namely, you shall take this scarlet cord, this rope of scarlet, by which you have let us down from the window into the trench below; and you shall hang it out at the window; and when we lay siege to the city, and with our battering-rams and other means break down all its defences, we will spare that house out of whose window there hangs this scarlet rope by which you have let us down into the trench; and, therefore, the signal will be this rope hung out." And then they argued, very

properly, "If your father and mother, and sisters, and brethren, keep within the house from whose window hangs this red rope; then they will be saved: that you may depend upon. But if they do not keep within; if they go into other houses; then of course we can give no pledge that they will be saved in the universal slaughter;" a very instructive lesson to us. Though this was a historic fact, yet does it not suggest that beautiful truth, that if we be found in Christ, the signal of which is our character, we shall remain unscathed amid the judgments of that day; "for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." But if not found in him, but where we should not be found, and where we are forbidden to be found, then your blood will be upon your own heads; you die suicides, not slain.

So the men returned, and told Joshua, their commander-in-chief, everything that had occurred; and, said that evidently this people were what is called now in military language demoralized; that is to say, "They have lost heart, they have lost courage; fear and dread is upon all the inhabitants of the land; and if we march at once to this demoralized city, we shall be able to take it by assault, and with very little delay."

RAHAB JUSTIFIED.

“Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?”—JAMES ii. 25.

THESE words of James must appear to most readers of the Bible contradictory to express and reiterated assertions of the apostle Paul. In fact, judged by the outward sound, unless there be some latent principle of harmony that is not indicated in the mere surface, one would say, indeed it has been said, that St. James directly contradicts the apostle Paul. If such be the case, one or the other was not inspired; and the writings of the one or the other ought not to be in the Sacred Canon. Luther, with that rashness into which his zeal occasionally ran, was so amazed at the statements, “Rahab was justified by works; and Abraham was justified by works;” that he called the Epistle of St. James an *Epistola Straminea*, an Epistle of mere straw; asserting it was not inspired, and ought not to be in the New Testament. This does not prove his opinion right; it only shows us that Martin Luther was not infallible. God did not choose the Reformers because they were perfect; he chose them for a specific mission, in spite of their imperfections. And if it should be said by any now, “God could not have used such men as Luther, Knox, Calvin, and others,

to reform the Church ;” we should at once retaliate, and with considerable effect, by saying, If God would not have used such men as Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, and Latimer, to reform the Church ; is it likely that he used such men as Gregory the Ninth, Hildebrand, or Gregory the Seventh, and the Borgias, to perpetuate and to maintain the Church ? But we know that the imperfections of our Reformers were borrowed partly from human nature, partly from the corrupt communion from which they had escaped ; and we are thankful to God that amid all the errors and corruptions that stained the history of the Reformers, there was so much that indicated the inspiration of his Spirit, the creation of his almighty grace.

I have said in the beginning of my remarks that these words almost contradict, if merely looked at in the letter, the express assertions of St. Paul ; for he tells us, in Romans iii. 20, “Therefore by the deeds of the law”—that is, by works—“there shall no flesh be justified in his sight ;” and in the twenty-eighth verse of the same chapter he concludes, “Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” And yet James says, “We conclude that Abraham was justified by works, and that Rahab was also justified by works.” The apostle Paul says in Romans v. 1, “Therefore, being justified,” not by works, but “by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I think I can present an explanation which will appear satisfactory ; indeed, all that could possibly be desired. Only, previous to directly giving that explanation, let me notice that each penman in the sacred Scriptures had for his subject one topic, or two or three chief

topics, on which he most emphatically dwelt. It did not imply that he denied the importance or ignored the existence of other truths ; but that some one truth was the dominating one in his mind ; and to that dominating truth he more frequently refers than to any other. Each penman in the New Testament seems to have had his peculiar mission, all to proclaim the purchase of the cross, but one to deal with it in one aspect, another in another aspect ; some with the springs out of which it came, others with the streams of sanctification, light, and love that flow from it. Each apostle and evangelist had his own peculiar idiosyncrasy ; the Holy Spirit, in inspiring that evangelist, did not annihilate his characteristic peculiarities, but consecrated, quickened, and enlightened them ; so that James is as distinct and as sharply defined a character as Paul, while Paul is the very opposite of Peter ; and no thorough student of the Bible will ever mistake a sentence from Paul as one extracted from Peter, or a sentence from Peter as one extracted from St. James. Inspiration is not the destruction of character, but the consecration of it. The inspiration of the sacred penmen was not reducing Matthew, and John, and Peter, and James, and Paul, into some common character ; but it was making use of James, and of Peter, and of Matthew, and of Paul ; each in his own style, after his own manner, under his own dominating impressions, as inspired and heaven-directed penmen, to record the wonderful truths and works of God. Now it has always appeared to me that the very perfection, the beauty, and the popularity of Scripture, is just owing, to a considerable extent, to its exquisite variety of style, its great diversity of manner ; and in the midst

of all, its pervading unity of inspiration and of truth. Paul dwells most on the awful sermon on the cross, the pardon it sealed, the righteousness it revealed and secured; and the bright prospects that the chiefest of sinners, resting on an atonement finished, might indulge for heaven, for happiness, and glory. James, on the other hand, seems to dwell more upon the sermon on the mount; and to make that sermon, with its exquisite truths, its sublime morality, the basis of almost all his teaching. The complement of James is Paul. Paul's Epistle would be incomplete without the Epistle of James, and the Epistle of James would lead to misapprehension and error if it were not for the Epistle of St. Paul. It seems, therefore, as if the Holy Spirit had assigned each writer his specific task, selected each according to his constitutional fitness; and inspired each to cultivate his own nook of the grand vineyard, and to record the great truths that in his mind, and owing to his peculiarity of taste and temperament, appeared the most striking, impressive, and important. Another element, too, that we need to take into consideration in estimating apparent difference between the inspired writers is the persons they addressed. We must not only look at the parties that wrote, but at the parties also that they wrote to. Paul found the Jew resting on his ceremonial observances, believing that by the excessive observance of one law he would not only be exempt from the observance of the rest, but be entitled by his obedience to it to an eternal weight of glory; and to the Jew, thus trusting in ceremonial and moral doings, he proclaimed the exterminating truth, "By deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified." He looked around again,

and he found the Gentiles, with a lower standard of morality, giving up almost the hopes of the future in despair, cast down, depressed, bewildered. And to these Gentiles he proclaimed the thrilling and the joyous news, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation; that Christ Jesus died to save sinners, of whom I am chief; that justified by faith, we may have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now while Paul preached that truth, and preached it where it was imperatively demanded, there arose among the Romans, the Galatians, and Corinthians, not a few who argued, most unfairly, that as it did not require obedience to the law to get a title to heaven there was no need of obedience to the law in order to honour God, promote the Gospel, and comply with the essential requirements of every page of inspiration itself. And this began so early that the apostle was compelled to say, in answer to such persons, "Do we then make void the law? God forbid; yea, we establish the law." And, therefore, it was as much as to say to them, because we are justified by a righteousness external to us, it does not follow that we are exempt from the obedience that a child owes to a parent, a subject to his prince, a creature to his Creator, and all to the Great Lawgiver. Exemption from the curse of the law is not exemption from obedience to the law. Deliverance from the law as a ground of acceptance is not deliverance from the law as a rule of faith by which we are to walk. For the same Gospel that tells me that I am justified,—not by anything I have done, or by anything I am, or by anything I have suffered, but by what Christ has done and suffered for me,—tells me at the same time that this grand truth, instead of lead-

ing to licence or indulgence in sin, leads, and compels every one, by the irresistible force of gratitude, allegiance, and love, to live soberly, and righteously, and godly; looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, our great God and Saviour. Now James takes up the Gospel just where Paul had left it; and shows his people that deliverance from the law as a condemning power does not lead to licence as the practice of those that have been delivered from it; but that on the contrary, the cross in which and by which our sins are blotted out, is also the mighty power through which and by which the love of sin is quenched or exterminated within us. And, therefore, while Paul dwells upon the mode of a sinner's acceptance in the sight of God, James dwells upon the fruits that such acceptance in the sight of man will necessarily lead to. James shows that to glory in justification by faith, and yet to wallow in sin, to be unjust, to be hard-hearted, to be unforgiving, is utterly incompatible. Paul argues against the disjunction of the two, namely, justification and sanctification, with all the force of an irresistible logic; James argues against the disjunction of the two by these simple, weighty, and expressive announcements, that if a man say he hath faith, and has not works, such a one is not a Christian. He evinces that he has no claim whatever to the title or to the character of a Christian. In other words, James shows that it is a perversion of grace to make it a screen for living in sin, instead of making it a reason for hating, detesting, and abjuring the practice of sin. And, therefore, you find in Paul the full unfolding of that great truth which Luther resuscitated in all its brilliancy in the sixteenth

century, justification by faith alone in the righteousness and finished work of Christ alone. But James, leaving this as the special mission and ministry of his brother apostle Paul, proceeds to show that appearance is not reality, that pretence is not piety, that a faith professed as yours, which does not develope itself in all the beautiful and fragrant fruits of Christianity, is a delusion, a deception, and a snare. James would regard the alleged possession of faith as justifying faith, which is yet barren, as no faith at all; just as we must regard a love laid claim to which will not warm the cold, nor clothe the naked, nor feed the hungry, as a sham, or pretence, and a delusion: so a faith which does not issue in beneficence, in brotherly kindness, in justice, in righteousness, in truth, is not the faith of the Gospel, but a mockery and a spurious imitation of it. Not that works are elements of faith,—this does not follow,—they are its fruits and its evidences; they are the sequence of faith, not any part of its substance. The want of good works in a man is not the want of an *element* of faith, but the want of the very *evidence* that he has that living and true faith by which we are justified in the sight of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But a passage has been quoted in James, which is certainly a very strong and a very marked one—wherein he alludes to Abraham, and asks, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” Now this seems to convey that Abraham was not justified, nor could appear justified in the sight of God, till he had brought forth the works which the

apostle here quotes as making his faith perfect : but this would be to show that God is not omniscient. God knew Abraham's faith long before it developed itself in works. Works were not requisite on the part of Abraham to enable God to know he was a Christian. God knew that before. Then it cannot be argued from this that works were necessary to constitute Abraham's faith a true faith ; but that these works, appearing to the world, which can judge only by what is external, were the irrefragable proofs that his faith was not a speculation, nor an intellectual, dry, dead dogma, but a living, vital, and prolific principle within. Abraham's faith was made perfect by works, just in the same manner as we say a tree is perfected by its fruit. A tree without fruit is imperfect ; fruit belongs to it ; and yet the fruit is not the sap of the tree, but the development of that sap. Good works are necessary to faith ; but works are not part of faith, or part of the ground of justification, which faith seizes, but they are the fruits of it. The autumn tests the fertility of the tree by revealing its fruitfulness. So a crisis in Abraham's life tested the reality and fertility of his faith, by showing what it could do, and what it could not do.

After James has referred to Abraham, he turns to the case of Rahab ; the case immediately before us, and shows that she also, like Abraham her great predecessor, was justified by works. She believed God, she felt her responsibility to him, she cast in her lot with the people of God, and she showed by the risk she ran of the destruction of herself if her own fellow-citizens discovered her, and by the confidence she had in the pledged and promised protection of the Lord God of

Israel, that she had true faith in him as the one living and true God. True faith has always a twofold aspect; one in reference to God, when it sees Christ alone as the ground of its hopes; another in reference to man, when it brings forth, and develops itself into whatsoever things are pure, and just, and lovely, and of good report. You may talk of a faith without works, or you may talk of pretending to faith without works; but to talk of living faith in the living and the only Saviour as without works, is to talk of a fire without heat, of a sun without light, of life without action, of a cause without an effect. If there be living faith, there must be of necessity its resultant and its living fruits. But we shall see at once the harmony that subsists between Paul and James if we attend to the following three distinctions, each of which I will endeavour very briefly to explain. We find in one passage, "justified by Christ alone;" we find in another passage, "justified by faith alone;" we find in a third passage, "justified by works," as in the case of Abraham or Rahab. How do we explain this? The explanation and distinction are obvious. We are justified by Christ alone *meritoriously*, we are justified by faith alone *instrumentally*, we are justified by works *declaratively*. That is to say, Christ alone is the ground of our justification, having merit available in the sight of God; faith alone is the instrument or means by which we lay hold upon that righteousness; and works alone are the outward declaration or manifestation to the world that we have living faith, resting on the living Saviour, and prolific, therefore, of every good and holy work. And this apparent contradiction among the evangelists, when we see the harmony that

underlies it, only gives a clearer proof that each wrote independently of the other, and all by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Now let us turn our attention to the first. We are justified by Christ alone meritoriously. All have sinned, all have incurred the penalty of sin, everlasting death and banishment from God. We have forfeited all that God gave us; we have incurred all the judgments he has denounced against sin; we have disfranchised ourselves; we are unable to climb the road that conducts to glory; we are ignorant of the very way itself by nature; we are lost coins, buried in the dust, lost sheep wandering in the desert, prodigal sons that have left their Father's home, and are spending their substance in riotous living. Jesus, as God, came down from that glory to which we could not rise, took upon him that nature which had sinned, stood in our stead, arrayed himself in our responsibilities, spake, lived, breathed, walked, and slept, in the face of heaven, as our accepted representative. I do not stop to discuss the justice of it, or to estimate objections to it, I am simply declaring what this book unmistakeably proclaims in almost every page. As our representative, standing in our stead, arrayed in our responsibilities, presenting himself before heaven and on the earth as our responsible person, he received into his bosom the curse that our sins had provoked, he trod that path that we could not tread, and obeyed that law that we could not obey; and God has declared,—and “Thus saith the Lord,” is the most conclusive of all arguments,—that he accepts all that that Saviour suffered just as if we had suffered it, and that he accepts all that that Representative did just as if

we had done it; and that as Jesus has paid all we owed as creatures, and endured all we had provoked as sinners, there is now no condemnation, no curse, no penalty, no hell, to all that are found in Christ, not having their own righteousness, but his. This is the simple explanation of Christ as the meritorious ground of our acceptance in the sight of God. He alone was made sin, that we may be made righteousness by him. He had no coadjutor in his sufferings, he will have no co-partner in his glory. To him as the only Saviour patriarchs, prophets, apostles, evangelists, reformers, look; in him, as the only ground of acceptance, we all trust and rely this day. Now what a blessed truth is this, that God looks upon me at this moment as no more doomed to everlasting misery than Christ is; that God looks upon me this moment, if I be a believer in this precious provision, as neither less nor more entitled to everlasting reward than the Son of God, the Saviour, is. It is not that we have a portion of a title, but if we be Christians at all, all our sins are cancelled by his atoning blood, that is, the guilt of them all; and our law has been obeyed by his glorious obedience. And hence, when the redeemed are presented before God, they are arrayed in white robes, washed in his blood, and presented a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing. Now if there be one truth that dominates like a key-note from Genesis to Revelation, it is this blessed truth, that the Gospel is not a directory for the healthy, as Unitarians think, but a prescription for the diseased, as Protestant Christians hold. And hence we preach to you not that you are well enough, and that all you need is to know the

way ; but that you are so bad, so diseased, that if you knew the way, you would not be able to walk twenty yards on the road that leads to glory ; that you not only need light, but life ; not only direction, but a cure ; and that the pulpit is not a desk from which are snowed down freezing laws, but a pulpit from which are proclaimed and scattered prescriptions for the sick, the diseased, and the dying.

We are justified by faith alone, *instrumentally*. I have shown we are justified by Christ alone, meritoriously : secondly, we are justified by faith alone, *instrumentally*. Faith seems to be that Christian grace which brings, by its very nature, nothing to the object it receives, but comes empty, destitute of all, to draw its nutriment, vitality, and strength from him alone on whom it rests. Love brings a glowing heart, hope brings a hoping heart, but faith brings an empty soul, an empty heart, disrobing its possessor of every atom of a title in himself, and laying hold upon Christ as the only robe in which he can be wrapped and clothed for immortality and glory. Jesus Christ alone, as we have seen, is the price paid ; but if that price be paid, it is necessary that I should plead that it has been paid, and myself quote it as my title, in order that I may be benefited by it. Christ is the robe, the raiment white and clean, arrayed in which I am perfect in the sight of God ; but unless I put it on, it can be of no use to me. If I neglect it, I undervalue it ; if I reject it, I put it away. Of the very necessity of the thing it follows that personally I must plead what has been done for me. If I do not, I do not value it, or I positively reject it. In vain was the brazen serpent lifted on the highest pole,

preached by Moses in the most eloquent and persuasive words, if the Israelite who had been wounded by the fiery flying serpent refused to look at it. In vain was the city of refuge proclaimed as the shelter for the homicide, if the homicide refused to enter it. To suppose that I can be saved by what Christ has done for me, otherwise than by my personal and deliberate exercise of trust in it and pleading of it, is to assume that I can be saved against my will, in spite of the disbelief and denial of his word; and that heaven will be filled by men who feel no gratitude, and therefore give no glory; than which nothing can be more absurd. Yet necessary, mark you, as faith is, it has no merit in it. I have said, Christ alone is the meritorious ground, faith alone is the instrumental ground. If there were merit in faith, my creed would now be word for word this—justified by works when we were innocent in Paradise; but as we failed, justified by faith, faith substituted for works. But what would this imply? That once we could have been saved by holiness of life; but that now we must be saved by clearness of conviction; that once we were saved by purity of character, now we should be saved by orthodoxy of creed. It is not FAITH that takes the place of works; it is CHRIST that takes the place of works. We are saved by works under the law, saved by Christ under the Gospel. There is no merit in faith. Surely it is not the hand that receives the alms, but the almoner, that is to get the thanks. Surely it is not the eye that looks upon the landscape that originates its splendour and its beauty, but the landscape that yields all. Surely it is not prayer that is to get the glory of the answer, but the Hearer of

prayer. Surely the man cast into the sea, seizing the plank thrown out to him from the ship, is not to thank the tenacity of his grasp, but the sympathy and compassion of the sailor that threw the plank to him. So the Christian now is not to give to faith, the hand that seizes or receives the prize of everlasting glory, any of the merit; but faith, like works, is to cast its crown before the feet of the Lamb, and to say, "Not unto me, not unto me, but to Him in whose blood we have washed our robes, and made them clean, be all the glory, and the honour, and the praise." We are saved by faith instrumentally.

But in the third place we are saved, as we are told Rahab was here, by works, *declaratively*. That is to say, works outwardly declare to a world that can neither search the heart nor appreciate the character of the man, what is the principle, or the life, or power, that sustains and regulates within. So far from any of the apostles thinking that living faith would ever exist without corresponding development in holy, beneficent, and gracious works, almost every chapter in the Bible, in which the great doctrine of acceptance before God through the blood of Christ is most vividly and clearly proclaimed, ends with practical and inferential truths; indicating that holiness not only becometh God's house, but becometh the recipients of his saving and distinguishing grace. Read the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; and then say, if the doctrines of grace be doctrines that lead to sin. The apostle, in almost every passage in which he refers to faith, speaks of it as a practical and prolific power. "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceed-

ingly, and the charity," or love, "of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth." So that you may always say if a man be dishonest, lying, uncharitable; if a man neither gives to the wants of the needy nor to the spread of the Gospel; if he live in what this Book condemns; he may pray like a wrapt saint, he may preach like an angel from heaven; he may put on the most plausible exterior robe;—he is not a Christian. And you are not to go and say, as we sometimes see in the newspapers, "There is a specimen of Christianity, there is what your Christianity will do!" It was the want of Christianity, not the presence of it, that will do wickedly; and instead of blaming the Gospel, you ought to blame corrupt and fallen human nature. But will you say, because there are men professing integrity who yet do dishonest things, that, therefore, there is no such thing as integrity on earth? Will you say, because hypocrites exist, that, therefore, there is no virtue upon earth? And in the same manner, is it fair to argue, because some loud professor has grievously sinned; because some vaunting professor has cheated, deceived, and robbed the widow and the orphan; that therefore, this blessed Gospel is to bear the blame? Ought you not rather to say, it was vice that clothed itself in the garb of virtue, in order to get currency on earth? It is the evidence of the excellence of this glorious Gospel that even its outward pretence becomes a passport to civil pre-eminence and power; and the very failure and sins of those that profess it, instead of being disproofs of its excellency, are latent and irresistible evidences that men esteem it, and regard it as in itself excellent; seeing they have deferred to

it so much, and laid on it so great a stress. Orthodoxy may be made a cloak for a licentious life; subscription to a creed may be used in order to conceal a crooked and a corrupt life. But to do so is to repeat and perpetuate the sin of Judas, and to embalm the corruptions of the dead in the very spices and sweet frankincense of the everlasting Gospel of Christ. Wherever there is true faith in Jesus Christ as the only ground of acceptance in the sight of God, it will draw from the Cross expiation for the past, inspiration for the present, energy for every good and holy work that lies in the future. What the dial is to the machinery of the clock within, what the fruit is to the tree, what warmth is to the fire, what light is to the sun, what effect is to cause: that good works are to faith in Christ; not creating or constituting it, but springing from it. In the court of heaven before God we are justified by Christ alone; in the court of the conscience within we are justified by faith alone; in the court of the world without we are justified by works alone. Christ alone in heaven: faith alone, of which I am conscious in my heart: works alone in my life, indicating whence my inspiration is. And that faith that receives Christ as its Priest receives him also as Prophet and King: that faith which looks for pardon through the blood of sprinkling looks for sanctification from the Holy Spirit of God. And wherever it exists, it burns with responsive love, mourns the defects of its character, grieves that so many imperfections should still cling to it, and strains its eye, and presses forward with all its

energy to "run the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith."

What a glorious consistency is the Word of God! What seems contradiction is resolved by greater study into greater harmony. What a wonderful book—that during some four thousand years, different men, kings, princes, fishermen, tax-gatherers, pupils at the school of Gamaliel, tent-makers, should all have written in different styles, in different ages, under different circumstances, under different provocations, and trials, and troubles; and when we come to compare them all, speaking different tongues, using different styles, addressing different persons, on different and often conflicting subjects; when we come to contrast, compare, and examine, we find the evidence of an inner inspiration that demonstrates they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And in the next place, how precious is that blessed Saviour whom Paul and James equally proclaim: all welcome to him, none prohibited; no man predestinated to a hell from which he cannot escape; no man impelled to a heaven that he will not enter; yet every man that reads or hears welcome this very day, this very moment, without waiting to be better, without staying for anything; but just as he is, to draw near to Christ as He is, to seek from him pardon; and as sure as he seeks it, instantly he will find it,—a Saviour that satisfied to the uttermost, able to save sinners to the uttermost still. He that thinks he has no need of Christ has no right conception of his own state; and he that thinks that Christ cannot help him has a very erro-

neous conception of what Christ has done. That blood that satisfied the justice of God,—oh, it is enough to satisfy the conscience of the awakened, though the guiltiest, sinner. God will give us nothing for our own sakes; but, blessed truth! he will withhold nothing for Christ's sake that we ask in his name. The awful responsibility of those that hear the Gospel is that they are so thoroughly welcome to accept it; and the awful ruin of the lost will be the reaction of a wilful, deliberate, rejection of Christ Jesus, and him crucified. Hell is filled with suicides only; none are there who are not self slain. God sends none there; they send themselves. The lost in misery will feel for ever, "We did it all ourselves, and nobody else;" the saved in glory will feel for ever, "We did none; Christ did it all. Unto him be glory, and thanksgiving, and praise; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be; world without end." Amen.

THE GREAT MIRACLE.

JOSHUA'S EXERTIONS. ORDERS. SEPARATION. JORDAN, BREADTH
OF. RATIONALIST WHIMS. CROSSING THE RIVER A MIRACLE.
BETHABARA. GOD'S PRESENCE.

FIRST, you will recollect that Joshua, after using all the natural means that God left, as far as it was fair and just, sent spies to search out the nature of the place or city called Jericho, which was first to be overthrown; and enjoined them to come back, as recorded in the previous chapter, and deliver to him a report of what they saw, what they met with, what obstacles were to be surmounted in the siege, and what reasonable prospects there appeared to them for entertaining the hopes of success. These spies came back to Joshua, who rose early in the morning, and removed with all the people to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there; in order that, unexhausted by a long and arduous march, they might be equal to whatever contingencies might overtake them on the morrow. For you must always notice that even amidst the miracles that shine so refulgent in the Scripture, there is always an immense amount of ordinary available means employed where it is proper to employ them; and in short, irresistible evidence of the total contrast between the miracles so interspersed with reason, with good sense, in the Bible, and the alleged miracles which are to be found in the

Bolandists, and other lives of the saints of a corrupt and apostate communion.

God then commanded the people that when they should see the ark of the covenant, the great symbol and memorial of a present God, and the Levites bearing it, they should remove from their place and march after it; and in order to show that deference and holy reverence which became them to entertain towards a symbol that was the nearest and most impressive symbol of Deity, they were to follow it at a specified distance of two thousand cubits by measure.

Then Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves; for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." I have often taken the opportunity of explaining that the word "holy," and "sanctify," the verb, and "holiness," the noun, in Scripture mean in their strict literal import "separation," that is all. The Hebrew word *kadosh*, the corresponding Greek word *ἅγιος*, and the corresponding Latin word *sacer*, as I have often explained, mean in their original, simply separation. And so strikingly do they mean this that they are applied to a bad purpose as well as to a good purpose: and mean separated to wickedness just as separated to holiness: in the same manner as if we were to translate it, "Sanctified to an abandoned course;" or "Sanctified to a consistent and a righteous course." Joshua uses the word "sanctify" in the sense, "Separate yourselves from all your ordinary courses; sequester your thoughts from profane things; disentangle yourselves and your families from all that might obstruct or prevent your march; for to-morrow God will manifest his power in doing wonders or miracles among you."

I may mention here that the Jordan, which was to be crossed, was at this part of its passage about sixty feet probably in breadth in its ordinary current. But at this season, which was the season of the barley harvest, and in the month of April, from the snows on Antilibanus, at the north end of Palestine, melting by the increasing heat of the sun, the waters of the Jordan commonly overflowed their banks. The river, as you are aware, extends from Antilibanus, a high and rocky, and in some parts, fertile range of mountains in the north part of Judea, runs through the lake of Gennesaret, till it is lost finally in the Dead Sea. The snows melting on Antilibanus swelled its floods about this season ; and the river during this time had overflowed its first banks and even its second banks, and had attained a very considerable breadth, as well as a very great depth of water.

Professor Robinson could not discover that the Jordan now overflows its banks: "I apprehend that even the ancient rise of the river has been greatly exaggerated. The sole accounts we have of the annual increase of its waters are found in the earlier Scriptural history of the Israelites ; where, according to the English version, the Jordan is said to 'overflow all its banks' in the first month, or all the time of harvest. But the original Hebrew expresses, in these passages, nothing more than that the Jordan 'was full (or filled) up to all its banks,' meaning the banks of its channel ; it ran with full banks, or was brim-full. Thus understood the Biblical account corresponds entirely to what we find to be the case at the present day."—*Researches*, vol. ii. p. 262.

I state this from the historic notes, in order to

obviate the constant tendency, which is indeed the characteristic of a great mass of the worldly men of the present age, to try, whenever they find a miracle in the Bible, to explain it away ; as if everything about us were not miraculous, and the evidence and the signature of the presence and the active operation of the Deity. But you are aware that the crossing of the Red Sea has been summarily explained by the Rationalists ; that is, those that think there is nothing in the Bible beyond the writings of very talented men, pretty honest on the whole, very liable to be mistaken, and who have perpetrated many blunders, and mistaken a great many things for miracles which were really pious delusions. These men have written to show that the crossing of the Red Sea was a master-stroke of Moses, a clever tactician, not a miracle done by God Almighty at that moment. They say he seized the moment when there was a strong wind blowing, and a neap tide, and enabled the people to pass through in this way, and made them believe that it was really a miraculous cleaving of the sea. But the narrative itself contradicts that. Either the whole narrative is falsehood, or it was a miracle ; because it says expressly that the waters stood up like walls upon each side. And this is recorded in the midst of a people who knew the facts of their history ; and who never could have accepted as a fact a phenomenon that had not really and truly occurred. But when we come to the passage of the Jordan, they are yet more puzzled ; because, in the first place, there was no tide in the Jordan ; there was neither spring tide nor neap tide : and, therefore, their explanation will not satisfy here. And secondly, the passage of the Jordan happened at

a period when its flood was the widest and deepest. The ordinary depth of its flood at that passage is some seven, eight, or nine feet ; and during a great flood its depth must have been very much increased indeed. Then, there being no tide, and scarcely the possibility of a wind so strong that it would blow the Jordan upward to Antilibanus ; and still more impossible that there should be such a wind that it could be able to blow down all the waters into the Dead Sea, and none should flow from the mountains and springs : and since, then, no wind can cut across a river, and make a channel or a path through it, there is no explanation of it except to say that the whole story is a falsehood, and of course the whole Bible must fare like it, for all stands or falls together ; or that, what common sense would even acquiesce in, what thorough investigation demonstrates, God interposed, cleft the rolling flood in twain ; and to show how completely it was miraculous, the waters that were cleft off upon the left, or towards the Dead Sea, rushed away to the Dead Sea, and the channel was dry ; and the waters upon the right, that were coming down from the mountains, stood a solid wall, and did not dare to rush down. We ask with the Psalmist, therefore, " What ailed thee, O Jordan ? " Why did this occur ? The only answer is, that the God that made heaven and earth did it. Common sense, common honesty, demands our acquiescence in a special miracle ; and all attempts to explain it away only indicate the folly, if not the fanaticism, of those that make the experiment.

Having seen the miracle itself, let us notice in the next place that we are not left in the dark as to the

place where it occurred, in order that there may be no means of escape from the universal conclusion which the common reader has always arrived at. It took place opposite to Jericho. Jericho was the first city of the Canaanites that was to be overthrown. And we know that that was the very spot,—by, shall I call it, a singular coincidence; perhaps that is not the right expression,—where John was found baptizing at, called Bethabara. Now the very name that was given to this place in the days of John conveys the fact of what had taken place; for Bethabara means in the Hebrew tongue “the place or the house of passage,” or “the transit.” What transit? The transit, the miraculous transit, of the children of Israel. At that very spot John was found baptizing; at Bethabara, opposite to Jericho; the very place where the Israelites crossed, and where the depth of the stream and its size may be measured still. Though, of course, one must admit that geographical, volcanic, and other changes, have taken place since that occurred, in some degree to modify or alter it, we are quite satisfied that it was a miracle; that it was God’s immediate presence. But why are men so anxious to get rid of these things? The secret is this. Tell them that this earth does not last for aye; tell them that the Royal Exchange, and the Palace, and the Parliament, and all our battlements and bulwarks, and all that is the strength, it may be the ornament, of our country, must all pass away like the baseless fabric of a vision; they do not like that; they want all to continue as it is; and they seize the argument that inspiration anticipated, “Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things

continue as they were ; ” and therefore, they argue, all things will continue as they are, onward and onward to endless and inexhaustible ages. So in the same manner, when there is a miracle, there is the evidence of a present God. Now the natural heart of man says, “ No God. I do not wish God to be here. ” And when you prove a miracle, you prove that God has not left the world an orphan world ; that he is not only over it and in it, but that he still controls and governs it ; and that these interpositions in these earlier days were just the evidences that he was, and that he had not forsaken it since it fell ; and the evidences, therefore, of a present God. But you say, why are there no miracles now ? That I cannot answer : we only see they are not : we see no historic testimony to prove that they are. Every attempt to show that miracles have been during the last hundred years at least, has failed. Why they are not I cannot say ; but this I do know, that God is no less present. It is as great a miracle that the seed should grow up into the wheat stalk, or that an acorn should grow into an oak, as that Jordan’s waters should be cleft in twain, or the Red Sea divided for the passage of the children of Israel ; only the latter is the unusual interposition of God, the other is his daily interposition and acting. But all natural laws, as they are called, are evidences of God’s presence ; but we are so accustomed to see the thing go on that we cease to think and to infer God is there, until he startles the world by some great interposition that contradicts the ordinary course ; and then we are constrained, in spite of the scepticism that would deny it, to say, “ This is the finger of God. ” And there is a

miracle that lasts still as great as any; that is, the change of the heart of the natural man into the heart of a Christian. "Except a man be born again," he made a new creature in Christ Jesus, "he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." And whenever you see a man become impressed with religion, live under its influence, act under its power, constrained by it, cheered, and gladdened, and inspired by it, you have there a standing proof that, not indeed physically and appreciably by the senses, but really and truly, God still interposes, and demonstrates to the anointed eye that he not only is, but acts in our present world.

MEMORIAL STONES.

NATURAL LAWS AND MIRACLES. JOSHUA MAGNIFIED. AUTHORITY
OF JOSHUA. MEMORIALS. VALUE OF MIRACLES.

IN the previous chapter, we read the description of the process employed by God for enabling his people to pass through the waters of the Jordan, encompass the first city of the Canaanites, lay siege to it, destroy it, and thus open a pathway to Jerusalem and the inheritance of the promised land. I showed in the course of my remarks, that all the elements of a supernatural deed were here ; and that it is impossible for the German Rationalists to understand by this, consistently, fairly, and honestly dealing with the Word of God, that it was anything else than an immediate interposition of omnipotent power. I stated at the same time that all above, beneath, and around us, is inlaid with miracles. The breath we draw, the pulse in the heart, the movement of a muscle, the volition of the mind, sending forth and transmitting its designs, and thousands of circumstances responding to that will, are all evidences of instant power ; so that literally and truly, not by a figure of speech, "In God we live, and move, and have our being." But you object—Then what is the difference between this and a miracle ? The difference is this ; the constant miracle is what we are daily in contact with ; but the

very repetition and excess of the miracle makes us think it, what we call it, a natural law; while the extraordinary interposition, which crosses, contradicts, or dispenses with what we call the natural law, and cleaves a passage through the Red Sea, or a pathway through the waters of the Jordan, is so contrary to the usual routine, that we cannot help seeing there what is equally elsewhere, but what is not so vivid or so visible, the footprints, the hand, and the interposing presence of God himself. If the great law were that all streams should flow upwards; if the law of gravitation were that floods should roll upwards, and if we had seen them do so for eighteen hundred years, we should say, that is the natural thing; although it requires a God to give that law at the beginning, and to maintain that law to the end; we should get so accustomed to it that we should say, that is the natural thing. And if we were to see a flood in one instance reverse the process, and go downwards, we should call this the miraculous thing. The fact is, a miracle is merely the suspension of the machinery of creation by Him that made it, or the making the wheel fly backward; or some process that we call a natural law indicate a reverse action: and we do not thus see a greater power, or the presence of a greater being; but from the unusual nature of the interposition we are constrained to see, what in the ordinary course we pass by, the presence and the finger of God. It is just as great a miracle that a seed should be cast into the earth, and grow into a spreading vine; that the vine should burst into leaf and blossom, and bear the rich grape; that on the grape being pressed, fermentation by a law just as permanent as gravitation

or vegetation should take place, and wine be the result; I say, that is just as great a miracle as when Jesus looked upon the water at the marriage feast of Cana of Galilee, and it was instantly turned into wine. The only difference is, that we are accustomed to the one process, and we call it nature; we are not accustomed to the other process, and we say, this is God. But God is just as much in what we call the natural process as he was in what we call the extraordinary process; only he shortened the period of the production at the marriage feast; he lengthens the period or the process for the production in what we call the ordinary works of nature.

Now we have here, then, in the water arrested in its downward course, standing on the right hand of the priests, who were stationed in the midst of the flood, like a wall, perpendicular and smooth; and the waters upon the left hand rushing down to the Dead Sea, and leaving the whole channel dry between the priests and the Sea, the irresistibly evident interposition of God. Why he did so then,—wherefore he did not wait till another opportunity, when the flood might be lower, or when natural means would accomplish what miraculous interposition did,—are questions that we cannot answer. This we are sure of, that God never works a miracle to help us when ordinary means and energy are adequate to it. To put the shoulder to the wheel, instead of calling upon Jupiter to turn it, was the prescription of a heathen; a prescription that has much practical good sense; it is God works within us, not that we may be idle, but to will and to do of his good pleasure. And it is not profanity, it is good sense, that they who will not help them-

selves, will not be, and deserve not to be, helped by the interposition of God.

But there was a design in this miracle, and that design was to fulfil a remarkable promise. He said of Joshua, "I will magnify thee, and I will be with thee, as I was with my servant Moses." Now Joshua was raised the general of a powerful army; he was sent to lay siege to a formidable fortress, called Jericho, on the other side of the Jordan, and the key to the possession of the land of Palestine. He needed to have reposed in him that confidence which Moses once had; and, therefore, it was necessary that he should be initiated in his most responsible office by some presence of Deity that would show that God was really with him; and that they were engaged in a righteous, a just, and a holy war. Now that presence was manifested in the Jordan. And accordingly Joshua, not by his own fancy, but according to the command of God, desired the priests to place their feet in the stream; and they instantly obeyed,—and the priests in those days did not say, "What right have we to take our orders from a soldier? Joshua is a soldier; we are priests: he is a ruler, a civil ruler if you like; we are sacred persons. This is Erastianism;"—they did not say so; they took the command from Joshua, who was appointed to take the place of Moses; and they did well and right in doing so: and many a priest in the nineteenth century would do well to take the prescriptions of his ruler instead of the prescriptions of a Synod; for the former are often more accurate and orthodox than the decisions of the latter. The moment the priests did so, bearing what was the symbol of a present God, the ark of the covenant,

the waters divided, the Israelites passed through, and reached the opposite bank; and the priests stood still till the last woman or child of that mighty host was safe upon the opposite side.

This having been done, it was important that some evidence of it should survive the act; that the next generation might see the wondrous work of God. And accordingly he ordered one out of each tribe to carry a stone, as heavy as he could bear; these twelve stones to be set up, one twelve in Gilgal, and another twelve in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the twelve priests, who bore the ark of the covenant, stood, and the stones remained till the day that Joshua sat down to write the historical record which we are now reading.

“That this may be a sign among you. A sign that shall permanently remain among you; a monument or memorial; a conspicuous object which shall be a standing witness of the wonderful event that has this day happened. Heaps, or pillars of stone, in commemoration of great events, such as covenants, victories, &c., have been common among all nations from the earliest ages. See Gen. xxxi. 46; Ex. xxiv. 4. In the present case, though there was no inscription on the stones, yet from the number of them, and from the place where they stood, it would be evident that they pointed to some memorable transaction, and of this it was to be the duty of each generation to keep its successors informed. It would likewise serve as a standing proof in corroboration of the matter of fact to those who might, in after ages, question the truth of the written history. The record of this great event might indeed be read in the sacred writings; but God, who knows

the frame of his creatures, and how much they are influenced by the objects of sense, kindly ordered an expedient for keeping it in more lively remembrance from age to age. So he has provided the sacrament of the Lord's supper to aid our understandings and affect our hearts by sensible symbols, though the same great truths which they represent are plainly delivered in words in the inspired oracles."—*Bush*.

Now this memorial was necessary. It is a law in our own experience that great events require suitable commemorations; that events which indicate special mercy, national or social, deserve special memorials, that other generations may see that they who tasted the benefit were not ungrateful for it at the time; that they traced that benefit not to their own skill or wisdom, but unto Him who is fearful in praises, doing wonders; and that they thought the interposition so great and so marked that subsequent generations should be enabled to read and to record it. Now it may be asked, why are not these stones still standing in Gilgal and also in the Jordan? The answer is, the authentic record of the fact is as good as the actual act. Persons say often now-a-days, "If we were to see a miracle, then we should be converted." But that is a great mistake. The lost man in misery asked that his brethren who survived him upon earth might see a miracle that they might be converted. But what was the answer? "They have Moses and the prophets; if they believe not them, neither would they repent if one were to rise from the dead."

THE INSTRUCTIVE MONUMENTS.

THE GREAT COMMEMORATION.

“And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

JOSHUA IV. 21, 22.

I TAKE these words rather as suggestive of a memorial far more lasting than the stones in Jordan, far more instructive to the people of God; the doing this in remembrance of Him through whose most precious blood we are redeemed, and by whose right hand we are guided safe through the streams of Jordan to Canaan's side. Before, however, I touch upon this, let us notice some lessons that rise immediately from these words. The words assume what is universally felt—the inquisitiveness of the young. It is a beautiful provision in the nature of youth, that every sight they see awakens an inquiry: every sound they hear stirs in their bosoms an echo; and they never can be satisfied without hearing explanations that great and wise men are needed to give, and that very acute and discerning spirits are prepared to canvass and discuss. It is therefore assumed here, that the children will ask in after ages, What do you mean by this? What is the use of these stones? In other words, that the

sight of the memorial will awaken their curiosity. And in the second place, it is assumed here, that memorials such as the stones in the Jordan are fitted to do so. It is not, therefore, a piece of national pride or conceit that raises the monument where the brave have fallen, or that builds the school as a memento of worth that has become illustrious ; or that, in some other shape, perpetuates the name of them who have shed a glory on the history of the land and bequeathed, by their sacrifices, their deeds, their virtues, benefits and blessings to latest generations. A miserable economy will ask, Why lay out so much on that high column or upon that great school, to commemorate some great man ? But human nature, from its deepest and its noblest depths, will justify the conduct of those who decided that great worth should be commemorated, and that lights that have passed through the world, it may be with the speed, but not with the evanescence of a meteor, should be enshrined in the grateful recollections of a people they have blessed ; and that standing and immutable memorials of what they were, should suggest to our children, What made these monuments, these schools, these stones in the Jordan ? In the next place, parents here are assumed to be primarily the teachers of their children. The words "When your children shall ask you," are addressed to parents. Curiosity in your children will be awakened. And the same nature in which this curiosity is so easily excited is eminently teachable. I do not say that you may not be taught in old age what you are taught in youth ; but you will not be taught so soon, or remember so thoroughly, or feel so deeply, in the evening twilight of life, what you could

have learned, and felt, and been impressed with, in its more beautiful morning twilight. But whether it relates to our children and parents or not, it certainly refers to those who are to come after us. And therefore, while we live, and those that are growing up around us ask, What mean ye by these things? we should be prepared to give a reason for the faith that is in us; and a reason that will justify the sacrifices of them who raised the monument or built the edifice, and to whose name and memory the one or the other has been dedicated. Now here we notice, that human memory is so forgetful of illustrious deeds, that it needs to have a constant refreshment in the memorials that commemorate them. And human nature is so prone to doubt or to deny what has been once visibly evinced, when that memorial commemorates what the natural heart is enmity to, that again we need such memorials to exist. There is an extreme of scepticism that thinks no memorial needful; there is an extreme of superstition that puts the memorial in the room of the object commemorated. There is one extreme that, in its recoil from the Romish Church, thinks all symbol, and all ceremony, and all form utterly worthless; there is another extreme that is found in that Church, that erects everywhere and ceaselessly memorials, till every corner of the street has its shrine, every public building its saint; and the sign of the cross is made Christianity; and matins, and nones, and vespers, take the place of praise; and robes and ringing of bells, and symbols, and signs, and pageants constitute religion. Is there not an intermediate course, that will give to the memorial what is due to it; that will lift the grateful heart

above the memorial, and give the glory where it is due—to Him to whose honour it is raised ?

The various commemorative symbols in Scripture are now all merged in one lasting and expressive one. Far simpler than the stones either in Gilgal or in the Jordan ; that no frosts and rains can destroy, and no flood can wash away in its fury, and no invader succeed in effacing. That beautiful memorial is, “ Do this in remembrance of me.” The rainbow, that proclaims still the ebbing of the flood and the impossibility of another, has passed away, at least as occupying a place in our affections and feelings. The stones in the Jordan, that stood where the feet of the priests were, and those in Gilgal, also, have all been swept away. The Passover, that pointed to the lamb that was sacrificed, the death of the first-born of Egypt, and the safety of the first-born of Israel, has ceased ; the events they call up to remembrance have passed away ; and the stepping-stones in the stream of time have fallen when they were no longer necessary to be perpetuated. The flood, the exodus, and the passage of the Jordan, have all,—not lost their interest,—but have their interest merged in a more magnificent event. Calvary and its cross must overspread the whole soul ; strike its deepest and most permanent impressions on the human heart. It is not that the rainbow, or the stones in the flood, or the evidences of the transit of the sea, have ceased to be interesting ; but that their tiny lights are overwhelmed by a splendour that brightens into everlasting noon ; and the interest that we felt in them is absorbed in the interest that we feel in a more precious and unspeakable deliverance. Let us refer to that which is the Christian me-

morial. Jesus said, as I have often quoted, "Do this in remembrance of me." Was it really meant that Jesus should occupy this exclusive, this lofty, absorbing, niche in the human heart? Was it really designed, and did he himself design, that he only should be cherished in its deepest and most sacred recollections? He did so. He says, "Do this in remembrance of me." From that very prescription I infer, what the Unitarian may shrink from, that Jesus was God. Abraham, Moses, Elijah, never dared to say, "Do this, perpetuate this, in remembrance of me." They never dreamed of ascending such a height; they never dared to claim the distinctive reminiscence. Why? They were borrowed lights; Jesus is the magnificent original. They were transient types; he remains the great end for which they existed. They were a part of the cloud of witnesses whose glorious fringe was derived from the rays of that unsetting Sun; he only is head over all; he alone could preach himself; he alone could say, "Look unto me;" "Come unto me;" "Do this in remembrance of me." All else were voices crying in the desert, "We are not the Christ; he cometh after us, whose shoe-latchet we are not worthy to unloose. Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world."

We have in the very institution itself the evidence that Christ deserved and justly claims this place, and is God. There are proofs of Christ's Deity in the New Testament, as many, as vivid, as unmistakeable, as there are traces and footprints on the earth, that the Creator of it is God. I have in this blessed book as many texts to prove to me that Christ is God, as

you have phenomena in this very earth, to demonstrate to you that its Maker is God. If Jesus were not God, this book would be a ceaseless temptation to idolatry. For when I think what he has done—when I think what he has suffered—when I think of his cross—when there come before me all his stepping stones to that cross, from the manger of Bethlehem, through Gethsemane, to that moment when he cried, “It is finished!”—when I think of what he has done for me, what he has suffered for me—when I recall what he bids me do in honour of him: if Christ were not God, every text in the Bible must be a temptation to adore, and worship, and praise him for ever. But we know in whom we have believed, and that he is God; and that to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is Christ, to the glory of God.

The crowning deed that was accomplished on the Cross, namely, the atonement made by the death of Jesus, is so singular, so unprecedented as a fact, so peculiar in its nature, that it of all events deserves a ceaseless commemoration. If Jesus died only a martyr, I do not see why this should be done century after century in remembrance of him. But if it be true that his death was not a martyr’s suffering, but an atonement and propitiation for us; if it be true that we are redeemed by his precious blood, that by him alone we have access to God, that his name is the password of the universe, and that trust in it is, without anything added or anything needed, an instant entrance into everlasting glory; then my commemoration of him cannot be too public, too prominent, too fervent, too grateful: and therefore I do this in remembrance of him. And very remarkable it is, too,

that in all other characters, the deeds that they bequeathed for commemoration have been such as strike the eye: the crossing of the Jordan, the escape of the first-born of Israel. But you will notice that when Christ selected an event in his biography for our ceaseless commemoration, what did he select? He might have selected that glorious baptism, when a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son;" and the Holy Ghost settled on his head, to anoint him for his sufferings. Or he might have selected that hour when he walked on the waves of the obedient sea; or when he cast out the fallen spirits from the hearts they had taken possession of; or when he raised dead Lazarus; or restored the son of the widow of Nain; or fed five thousand by his word. One would have thought, that if he was to perpetuate an event of startling and stupendous splendour, it would have been some of those great facts in his life; but he did not select one of them. He selected for special commemoration that which to the world was his shame, to the Greek, his folly, to the Jew, his stumbling block; but to us who are saved, the wisdom of God and the power of God. Now if this be so; if he selected his death for special commemoration, does it not prove, if we had nothing else, that there must have been in that death something peculiar, something totally different from an ordinary death? In other words, he spake as man never spake, he lived as man never lived, and he died as man never died. He died a propitiation and atonement for our sins. In that death and sacrifice there are elements that should make us commemorate it. He has, by his blood, and sacrifice, and death, laid open a path-

way, not across the Jordan, whose flood soon evaporated into a land that is the haunt of the robber and the scene of contending factions, political and ecclesiastical; but he has opened a pathway for all that are willing to follow across the valley of the shadow of death into a Canaan whose sun never sets, in which there is no weeping, nor sorrow, nor crying; a rest that remaineth for the people of God. And we set up, in commemoration of this transcendent event, this unprecedented benefit, not dead stones in the midst of the Jordan, that its waters may wash away; but we gather round his table, living stones, part of a living temple, to show forth the praises of Him who hath thus called us from darkness into his marvellous light. And in the second place, when we do this in remembrance of him, and celebrate this ceaseless memorial to his glory and to his honour, we commemorate his resurrection from the dead. There are two great things in Christianity that are its peculiar distinctions; the atonement, and the resurrection. The ancient philosopher guessed that the soul was immortal; but Athens' proudest ones scoffed at the idea of the resurrection from the dead. But we believe that the body is not a mere shell in which the soul ripens, to be cast away; but that it is part and parcel of me; that man is the lowest link in the world of spirits, the highest link in the world of animals; and, as it were, the connecting link between both: that his body is just as truly redeemed as his soul is redeemed by that precious blood from the destructive poison and penal consequences of sin. Now, in order to teach us this, Jesus rose from the dead, not only triumphant over sin, but the first fruits and earnest

of the resurrection of all that have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. There is an instinct in human nature stronger than the reasonings of metaphysicians; a holy instinct, that makes every one long, not only to know that it is well with our dead, but that we shall gaze on their features, restored and illuminated with an undying glory. And it is to me one of the most glorious truths in this blessed book, that the scattered dust that was once built up in domestic groups, full of life, of sympathy, of love, shall again be collected, and quickened, and formed into shining tents, in which the redeemed and their happy souls shall live for ever and for ever. There is not an atom of dead dust beneath the stormy waves of the Euxine, not a Christian sailor-boy that sleeps in the deep caves of the Baltic, nor a shattered frame that the sabre and shot have devoured now resting beneath the green sods of the Crimea, that shall not hear the sound of the resurrection trumpet, and—scoff at it, metaphysicians, laugh at it, philosophers, as you like—that shall not come atom to atom, and appear, no more with the clinging robes of corruption and decay, but radiant with the splendours of eternal beauty, glory, and perfection. Jesus rose again; so them that sleep in Christ will he bring with him. There is not one familiar feature that constituted likeness that shall perish; there is not one well-known tone of the voice that shall be hushed for ever; there is not one trait in the countenance, one peculiarity in the taste, one element in the temper, however fugitive, that shall not rise again at the last day.

When we surround a communion table, we commemorate this blessed truth, that our sins are forgiven

through a Saviour's blood ; and we there say, As sure as we surround this table, living men in living bodies, to commemorate a death that once was, so sure shall we, and all that have fallen asleep in Jesus, surround him in glory, knowing and being known of each other. We set up our memorial for this ; we surround that table for this ; and it is worthy of it. We again commemorate his intercession in heaven for us. We not only look back from that table to a Saviour that has been ; but, like Stephen, we look up and see the heavens open, and witness God, and Jesus at the right hand of the Father. We are very often apt to think of Christ as a historic personage in the past, transmitting along eighteen centuries great and blessed privileges ; and we are prone to forget that he is a living being in the present, transmitting down grace, and glory, and every good thing. Christ is the Alpha of yesterday ; the Omega of to-morrow ; the same to-day and for ever. At that table we not only commemorate a dead Christ, from whose grave there comes absolution for our sins ; but we proclaim our belief in, and our joy at, and our sympathy with, a living Christ, who knows me, sees me, is interested in me, as intensely, as truly, as if I were the only being that he shed his blood for, and the only one in whom he feels interested in heaven and in earth. It is such a pity that we lose ourselves in the crowd ; and fancy that Christ interceding at the Father's right hand lifts up a sort of general prayer for all ; but truly he sees, and knows, and sympathizes with individuals, and enters into all the woes, and sorrows, and sufferings of the humblest Christian upon earth, as if that humble Christian were the only one in the world besides.

The loneliest sufferer in the desert is not forgotten by him ; the faintest and the feeblest cry on earth has its resounding echo in that heart of hearts. You may have no patron below ; but you have a powerful Advocate on high. You may be despised by the mighty upon earth ; but you are neither deserted, nor despised, nor forgotten, by a living Intercessor in heaven. And when we appear at that table, we silently, but emphatically say so.

We ~~do~~ this in remembrance of his promise to come again, and to receive us to himself ; that where he is, there we may be also. The apostle tells us, "Ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come." It seems at first strange, that we should commemorate the future. It is a commemoration or memorial of the past ; it is a pledge, an earnest, a promise of the future. And therefore, a communion table is meant to do, in reference to Christ, what the stones in the Jordan were designed to do in reference to Israel. Those stones that lifted their shining tops, either in Gilgal, or above the flood, not only commemorated God's omnipotent interposition in their deliverance then ; but were, by the very fact that they commemorated such, pledges that when other Jordans were to be crossed, when other floods were to be passed, that God, who had been with them in the past, would be with them in the future, their Great Deliverer, their help in time of trouble. At that communion table we commemorate not only what took place upon the Cross, but we also anticipate, as reflected from it, all the glories and the splendours of the crown. The past, the present, and the future, are there brought vividly before us. We refuse to settle down with things as

they are. We cannot accept this world as a world that God made, and as God made it. We believe that this world is a disordered and dismantled world, where sin has had its triumphs and its trophies, as well as grace; and we look forward, therefore, to that day when he who has paid the price shall come to take possession of the property. That precious blood has redeemed my soul; has redeemed my body; and has redeemed that once beautiful world which God made, and pronounced when he made it, very good.

And, therefore, I look forward from a communion table to the extinction of the curse; to the expulsion of Satan from the world; to the restoration of Eden in more than its departed glory; and to that blessed day when all space shall be the temple of God, and all flesh shall adore him, and the whole universe shall reflect his glory and reverberate his praise. It is a joyous thought that we may be prisoners, but we are prisoners of hope; and that we have just as certain proof that Christ will come to take possession of what he has paid the price of, as that Christ did come and on the cross pay the price of his precious blood, a ransom for us. And this communion table, too, impresses upon us, not only the promise, but it impresses upon us the very certainty of all these things. Do you recollect, when it was first instituted, that the very event—and this is very remarkable—which this communion table was designed to commemorate, had not actually occurred when it was first instituted. It was to show forth the Lord's death. But when was it instituted? On the evening before he died. And why? Because, to Christ, what he has said shall be, is just as certain as if it already were. And, therefore,

that communion which the disciples celebrated on the eve of his crucifixion, was to them a foreshadow, a pledge, an earnest, of the events of the morrow. And when the evening of the morrow came, they saw in the deeds that had transpired in the day, the fulfilment of the pledge they had celebrated on the previous day, and the evidence, "Thy word, O Lord, is truth." Now, as the Lord's Supper was to the disciples in the first instance a prophecy of to-morrow, so it is in the language of the apostle still, a showing forth of Christ's "death until he come." And when he comes, then it will cease; then all symbols, shadows, ceremonies, will pass away; the sun will have risen, and the clouds will be dissipated; the great light will have come, and the stars are put out in his brightness. This beautiful ordinance, too, tells us another lesson: that Jesus has sanctified and sweetened sorrow. What was his name? The Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. What was his whole life? A baptism of sorrow. We know that half of human life is often tears and clouds, if the other half be sunshine; we know that each has his own sorrow, but that all feel sorrow the heir-loom of human kind; we can well understand how precious it is that the Man of Sorrows has sweetened and consecrated it for us. Tears now wept by the Christian are not the tears the twin fugitives from Paradise wept, when they beheld behind them the departing glory, and before, the opening desert. The cup of suffering that thousands are obliged to put to their lips has nothing of the untempered bitterness of Sinai. Suffering is on a Christian the eloquent proof that he is a disciple: death is to a Christian a sweet sleep, the everlasting refreshment at the end of his journey, that

precedes his rising in the eternal morn, and worshipping in that ceaseless Sabbath within the veil. Sorrow has become, because Christ is the Man of Sorrows, a holy and a sacred thing. And who does not know that his saddest hours have often been his sweetest ones? In the bitterest cup, the Christian has often found the most precious pearl. And what Christian does not believe that when we stand on the margin of the everlasting rest, and look backward to our most painful and our most poignant moments, we shall be constrained to say, "If I had not shed those tears, and drank that cup, and trodden that flinty way, and borne that storm, and braved that trial, I had lost my crown, my Saviour, my eternal rest." Blessed thought, glorious truth, that sorrow is now a consecrated missionary and minister to all them that believe.

And let me notice, in the next place, that at the communion table, this memorial of Him who died for us and rose again, we commemorate the unity and communion of all true Christians in heaven and in earth. If there be one spot on earth where the ecclesiastic is to be merged in the Christian; where we are to forget that we are Churchmen or Dissenters, and to feel only the magnificence of our common Christian relationship—that we are Christians—it is at the Lord's table. We do not there join a Church; we do not do this in remembrance of a sect, a denomination, a party, an apostle, a reformer, an angel; but in remembrance of Christ. It is the place where there should be no Churchmen, no Dissenters, no Presbyterians, no Independents, no Episcopalians; Christians only. It seems to me that

beautiful and holy spot that Jesus himself has consecrated, where for once at least we can meet without the jagged edges of one sect rubbing against the jagged edges of a rival sect ; but where we can feel that all are one in Christ, and therefore one with each other. It is at a communion table we rise above the low and stormy levels of party and ecclesiastical war, and bask in the rays of that unsectarian sun in whose beams all fair fruits ripen ; and breathe that catholic atmosphere which is the atmosphere of the blessed in heaven and of all true Christians upon earth, where we can feel :—

“ One family, we dwell in him ;
One church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream—
The narrow stream of death.

“ One army of the living God,
To his command we bow ;
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.”

That table is not in a side chapel, where the name of the founder is commemorated ; but under the roof of the grand catholic cathedral, where Christ and him crucified is all and in all.

“ Between let oceans roll ;
Yet still from either beach,
The voice of blood shall reach,
More audible that speech,
We are one.”

It is the Christian Delos. It is the spot where no weapon of warfare should be ; where we meet and mingle, if it were only once in a year, to let the world

see that we have one invisible head in heaven, and one visible thing upon earth which is the symbol and the sign of Catholic Christianity.

This communion table is the memorial on earth of a home, and a service, and a rest beyond the stars. There are capabilities of service in the humblest individual for which earth has no place; there are capacities of good in the humblest heart that never yet have been filled below. We feel that a future glory is necessary in order to explain our present condition; and we know that grace culminates in glory, that earth will ripen into heaven; and that this table is not only the memorial of what has been, but the pledge of what shall be a rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Can that religion be an insignificant thing which so many types preceded and so stupendous memorials still characterize? Is it of no consequence that you reject it; is it of no moment that you despise, undervalue it? Impossible, you may depend upon it, living religion is the most momentous and the most instant concern to every human being in God's created universe. Is not our religion a religion of reason, of intelligent inquiry? When your children shall ask you, What does this mean? It is to provoke discussion, it is to exhort a reply. And every man ought to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him.

When you come to a communion table, suppose some person were to meet you by the way, and say, What do you mean by being seated at that table, and eating a little bread, and drinking a little wine? what should be your answer? It ought to be; not that there is any virtue in that bread to my soul; not that there is any

cleansing in that wine from my sins ; but if Jesus had bid me collect the first flowers of spring, or the last rose that blossoms in autumn, and once a year lay it down upon a table in the midst of the sanctuary, that would have been my sacrament. Or, if he had been pleased to bid me bring a pebble, and deposit it upon that table once a month ; that would have been my sacrament. It is not virtue in the bread, or efficacy in the wine ; Jesus has instituted it, his institution makes it significant ; his name associated with it gives it consecration. And therefore I do this in remembrance of him ; not ashamed to proclaim my adoration of what he has done, not ashamed to own my attachment to his cause ; not afraid to go forth into the world, and demonstrate to the most severe inspector of my career that his grace has enabled me to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour.

NOTES.

V. 9. *Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan.* As it is evident, from the connexion, that this was actually done by the twelve selected persons above mentioned, it is ascribed to Joshua only as commanding and superintending it, just as the building of the temple is ascribed to Solomon. Two sets of stones, therefore, were erected in memory of this miraculous passage, one at Gilgal, the other in the bed of Jordan. Should it be asked how the latter could serve as a monument, placed as they were in the middle of the stream and liable to be concealed below the surface, we answer, that as nothing is said of their being each of them, like the others, of a size suitable for one man to carry, they might have been vastly larger, and so based upon a lower heap as to be *generally* visible, and thus indicate the very spot where the priests

stood with the ark ; for it is to be remarked, that the Jordan, at its ordinary stages, is not a deep river, and that its waters are remarkably clear and transparent, so that an object like this might probably always be seen, except in the time of a high freshet.

V. 23. *For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you.* The parents are still supposed to be speaking to their children. It is remarkable that they address them as if they were living and present at the miraculous passage of the Jordan, whereas they then existed only in the loins of their fathers. But it is not uncommon for the sacred writers to speak of the nation of Israel, through every period of its existence, as if they were *but of one generation*, so that what really happened to those that lived at one age, is said to have happened to those that lived at another, perhaps far remote. This gives us a very impressive idea of the light in which God viewed that people, viz., as morally one, as one great collective person continually subsisting. Thus Ps. lxvi. 6, the writer speaks as if he and his contemporaries were personally present at the passage of the Red Sea, "He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot; *there did we rejoice in him,*" though this happened ages before their time. So also our Saviour speaks as if the Jews of his day were living in the days of Moses, John vi. 32, "Verily I say unto you, Moses gave *you* not that bread from heaven." On the same principle Joshua speaks here.—¶ *The Red Sea which he dried up from before us.* This is another instance of the usage just adverted to. He speaks of the Red Sea's being dried up from before the people whom he then addressed, whereas none of that generation were now living except himself and Caleb, the rest of them having perished in the wilderness through unbelief and rebellion. It is also to be remarked, that this passage through the Jordan being here said to have been accomplished in the same manner with that through the Red Sea, the inference is legitimate, that the waters of that Sea were actually divided like those of the river, and that they did not merely retire from the shore, as some have supposed.—*Bush.*

JOSHUA, CHAP. V.

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand : and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries ?” &c.—JOSHUA V.

THE portion of this chapter which relates to the renewal of circumcision is neither interesting nor suitable for family reading.

“*And circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.* Heb. *ושוב מל* *veshūb mōl*, return (and) circumcise. This is not to be understood as a command to *repeat* circumcision on those individuals who had already received it. This would have been at once unnecessary and impracticable. It merely implies that they were to *renew* the observance of a rite which had been neglected in their travels in the desert. The command was given now, at this early period, after their entrance into the promised land. (1) That the reproach of Egypt might be rolled away ; (2) That they might be duly prepared to celebrate the Passover, of which none might eat who were uncircumcised, Ex. xii. 48 ; and (3) As a trial of their faith under the circumstances in which they were now placed, surrounded by enemies intent upon their destruction, and who could desire no greater

advantage than such a crippled state of their invaders would give them. There is a general circumcision now of the people, as there had been at their coming out of Egypt; and as God then closed the Egyptians in three days' darkness that they could not stir, so now he striketh the Canaanites with terror, that they dare not stir to hurt the people while they were sore. Circumcision sealed the lease of the land of Canaan; and therefore as soon as they set foot on it they must be circumcised."—*Lightfoot*.

"10. *And kept the passover.* Heb., 'and made the passover.' The third from its institution. The first was observed in Egypt on the eve of their departure, the second at Sinai on the following year, Num. ix. 1, 2, while during the long interval down to the present time it had been wholly suspended. Amos v. 25.—¶ *On the fourteenth day of the month.* That is, the fourteenth day of the first month, or Nisan.—From this remarkable portion of the sacred narrative we may learn (1) That in whatever circumstances we are placed, religion should be our first concern. If ever there were circumstances which would seem to justify the postponement of religious duties, one would think they were those of Joshua on this occasion, when he had but just set foot on the land where great and powerful nations were prepared to combat for their very existence. Yet we behold him calmly and sedately engaging in the duties of religion, as if it were of vastly more consequence that God should be honoured and served in the way of his appointment, than that the preservation or triumph of Israel should be secured. (2) To place implicit confidence in God, even in the midst

of the most appalling dangers. Nothing, to human view, could have been more rash or perilous than for the chosen people, just at this juncture, to suspend all their military preparations, and give themselves to the celebration of a religious festival. But conscious of being in the way of duty, they reposed so strong a confidence in the protecting power of Jehovah, that they gave themselves no concern as to the many dangers by which they were surrounded. Provided our motives and our conduct are right, we can be in no hazard of confiding too implicitly in God.”—*Bush*.

THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION.

THE portion of the chapter that follows is instructive:—

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and, looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay: but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord’s host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot: for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.”—Joshua v. 13—15.

This incident occurs previous to the address of a new commission to Joshua in the chapter that immediately succeeds this. The enquiry suggested by reading these words is, Who was this personage? What was the necessity or the occasion of his appearance? and what is implied by Joshua’s worship, reverence, and obedience given to him?

Throughout indeed the Books of Genesis and Exodus such appearances are not unfrequent; and most who have studied this subject say that every appearance of Deity without exception in the Old Testament was that of the Second Person in the

Blessed and Glorious Trinity; the same Being that shone in the *shechinah*, that spake from the cloud, that marched before the host in the desert, that guided and conducted them into the promised land. By looking at the passage before us we shall infer that this personage who appeared to Joshua on this occasion could not be any created angel, could not be any created person superior to Joshua, who was the chief commander and leader of all the hosts in the desert; and from what is said to him and demanded by him, we justly infer that he was essential Deity. What he assumes to himself is the phrase, "Captain of the host of the Lord;" or in the margin, "The prince of the host of the Lord." The word Jehovah is employed; it is equivalent to "Lord of hosts." This personage, therefore, who appeared in the form of a man, distinctly said, "I am the Lord of hosts." And when we take this phrase in connexion with those that occur in the New Testament; "Christ the Captain of our salvation: The Prince of the kings of the earth: Lord of lords:" we can see that substantially the very same phraseology applied to him in the New Testament is here applied to him in the Old; and that this was not only Deity, but was the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity. And we find that the moment that Joshua heard who he was from his own lips, instinctively, knowing what his legitimate claims were, he fell down and worshipped him. Now if this had been a created angel, Joshua would not have fallen down and worshipped him; and no less, if he had been a created angel, would he have spurned, repudiated. and protested against the very appearance of giving him the worship that is due

only to God. We find in the Book of Revelation an illustration of this ; when John, under a misapprehension, offered worship to an angel. "I John fell down at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me See thou do it not ; I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus ; worship God ; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." So again in Rev. xxii. John says, "And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not ; for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book : worship God." Now we are quite sure that so jealous, to apply human speech to Deity, so jealous was God of any homage given to any created being, that nothing was branded as a greater sin against religion, or punished more severely, than giving to a creature the worship that was due only to God. But not only does this being who appeared to Joshua not repel the worship that was offered, but he demands it ; He says, "Loose thy shoes from off thy feet." When Deity appeared in the burning bush, and spake as Deity to Moses, and gave directions, such as unequivocally and unquestionably prove they are the words of Deity ; on that occasion the command to Moses was, "Take thy shoes from off thy feet : for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." So here we have the same command given ; and, therefore, implying that Deity had come down to earth, touched and consecrated the spot with a celestial presence ; and that human nature, even in so

exalted a personage as the successor of Moses, and the commander of the legions of Israel, must reverently bow down and worship before him. It is the actual presence of Deity that gives real consecration to a place; and when Deity forsakes the place, it becomes only common ground.

This appearance of Deity, probably our Blessed Lord in the form of man, is connected with Joshua's special mission. Recollect what Joshua was appointed to do—to cross the Jordan, to destroy the fortified places of the Canaanites, exceeding many, and walled up to heaven. He might naturally fear, or hesitate, or doubt, his success. Our Blessed Lord, therefore, whose promise is “Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world;” in the future, as he has been with us always from the beginning of the world in the past; appears to Joshua, and in that form that would indicate what Joshua's mission was, and what the resources of this Divine Being must necessarily be. Joshua had a military command, had an order from heaven itself to go and take possession of the land of Canaan; and this manifestation of Deity, even our Blessed Lord, was made in such form and with such accompaniments as must have satisfied Joshua that he was right in doing what he intended to do, and also inspired him with the belief that he would be successful in accomplishing the great end of his mission. Extraordinary duties require extraordinary strength; and therefore when Joshua had a mission more momentous, more difficult, than ordinary, he has here a manifestation more sustaining, more unmistakable, and encouraging, than ordinary. We learn from all this that if we are sure the work in which we are

engaged, whatever that work may be, is sanctioned by God, we need have no doubts or fears about engaging in it. Our great enquiry in undertaking anything ought not to be so much, though in its place it should be, Is it difficult or is it easy? but, Is it clearly and unmistakably my duty? Is it clearly indicated to me as my mission either in God's word or in his providential guidance? Common sense, an enlightened mind, a pious heart, a prayerful spirit, will enable one to find out by comparing what occurs in providence without, with what is written in the book within, whether a given course be what is commonly called a providential calling. If we are satisfied that any work in which we are about to engage is a providential cause, that has come to us in the providence of God, and therefore that it is not wrong, but on the contrary, apparently to us conducive to much good; we ought to engage in it in the strength of Him who has opened it out for us, satisfied that in such a cause duty is ours; while success is here and everywhere, and now and always, with God. We are not answerable for success; we are only answerable for service; and if in any great service we have not done all that we could wish, if it can be said of us that we have done what we could, it is all that we have reason to expect. We may be sure of this, that as our day is, our strength will be. And the very conviction that God is with us, and that his word sustains us, and that his promise will bring all to our good and to his glory; that in itself lightens the burden, makes the yoke easy, and enables us to walk and not faint, and run and not be weary.

When Joshua saw what was clearly his mission,

how he would be sustained in it by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the unconditional acquiescence that he exhibits in Christ's will and word concerning him is obvious ; he has no fear, no doubt. His first impression was to rush into his presence and ask, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries ;" but the moment he learns that he was the Lord of hosts, that moment he says, "What saith my lord unto his servant?" Now it is not what I think, it is not what I fear, it is not what I doubt, but it is, "What dost thou say ? Thy will shall be my work ; thy command I shall feel my mission ; and being satisfied that I am engaged in doing thy will and obeying thy word, I shall have no more irritating and perplexing thoughts upon the subject ; I will hear what thou, Lord, wilt speak ; I will sit, like the recovered demoniac, and listen at the feet of Jesus." This teaches us that Christ's word is alone conclusive in anything connected with our moral, spiritual, and personal conduct. His word is alone conclusive ; a clear text from the Bible is just as obligatory upon us as if God were to bow the heavens and come down and speak. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past to the fathers, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son ;" and that speech which God spake is now written in his own inspired and blessed word. His word, therefore, is to be our great law ; his revelation our great guide : and what he has commanded there is duty ; what he has forbidden there is sin. And what was heard by Joshua on holy ground is now read by us in holy Scripture. Our holy ground is this blessed book. The Captain of the Lord's host speaks to us in every promise, precept, and parable of this

blessed book. We are no more to go here or go there in order to hear God speak. Gerizzim and Sion are now discrowned of all their peculiár sacredness ; but this blessed book is the perpetuated, lasting, uncorrupted expression of the mind of God ; and we are to hear God speaking in it just as the heathen heard his god in his oracles, as Joshua heard his Saviour on holy ground, or Moses his commands from the midst of the burning bush.

We gather from this passage too a very interesting confirmation of the truth—that Christ is God. If this be that Being who appeared here, the angel that wrestled with Jacob, the Being that spake from the burning bush, that preceded Israel in the desert in the pillar of fire by night and in the pillar of cloud by day ; we have no doubt that he is the same Being who is called in the New Testament God over all. There is no doubt that an atonement which has not added to the sufferings of the man the infinite satisfaction of Deity, would be no atonement at all. An angel, or the holiest and purest creature in the realms of glory, never could make atonement, never could obey in my room ; because when he renders all the obedience that God demands, he has only done what he ought to have done as a creature. And to make a creature suffer for me would be unjust ; because the law of God's universe is that a holy creature should always be a happy creature ; and to make a holy creature unhappy that I might be happy would be unjust and unfair. But the moment we ascertain that Jesus was not simply a holy creature, but that he was also, however incomprehensible to us, and I admit it is incomprehensible, the mighty God, then he could say what

the holiest creature I have alluded to cannot say, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up:" that is I am God, the Lord of Life; and not merely a living creature. The highest intelligence in heaven has no power to lay down his life: if he were to do so, he would be a suicide. But Jesus was the Lord of life, as the suffering and sorrowing man, and therefore he had power to lay down life, and he had power to take it up; and he stood in a higher and holier relationship to God than a mere creature possibly can. We thus then gather from this that Jesus of Nazareth is God.

We very often in our case, as was the case here with Joshua, misapprehend the appearance of our Blessed Lord. When this Being came with a drawn sword in his hand, Joshua evidently went up with hesitating boldness to him, and said, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" doubting what he was, what he meant, or upon which side he fought; and therefore he asked this question. The disciples in the storm, when Jesus came to deliver them, thought they saw a spirit, and were afraid. And we all know ourselves that we very often construe what we do not immediately understand as in some sense adverse to us. What is unknown in the world of spirits is more or less terrible to us. And therefore when anything happens to us very startling, very grave, very solemn, we are apt to construe it as very hostile. We interpret God's dealings in the light of our own sinful nature. Joshua here, perhaps, had the fear that this Being was against him; and therefore he asked the question, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Now it was this ignorance of Christ that occasioned

him to do so. Had he known who it was that appeared to him, he would not have said so; but he would have asked, and he would have given him living water, even from heaven. It needed then and it needs still Christ to declare himself to us, that we may trust in him, and not be afraid. And when he manifests himself to us in another way than he doth unto the world, then we are ashamed that we ever doubted him; and we rejoice that acquainted with him we can now love him. The whole of Christianity is fitted to inspire the believer with love to Christ, with affectionate joy about him, a reverential apprehension of his character; and to lead him to go forth into the world, not to presume because Christ is merciful, not to sin because grace abounds; but the more on that account to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour.

Is this Saviour our trust? Is he our Prophet, our Priest, and our King? Do we rely on him as set forth in the gospel, and receive him as our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption? This is a momentous inquiry, an urgent question. May he be so; and to his name be praise, and honour, and glory. Amen.

NOTES.

Bush in his notes on this passage well observes.—¶ *There stood a man.* One in the appearance of a man, one whom Joshua at first took for a man. That he was a superhuman being, however, is evident from what follows; and there seems no good reason to dissent from the established opinion

of both ancient and modern expositors that this was no other than the Son of God, the Eternal Word, appearing in that form which he was afterwards to assume for the redemption of men. The reasons for this opinion are, (1) The title which he here gives himself, 'Captain of the host of the Lord,' which is but another form of the name "Lord of hosts," implying the ruler of all the heavenly hosts, and which is evidently the appropriate title of Jehovah-Jesus. (2) His acceptance of the worship or adoration which Joshua here pays him. This an angel or any created being would undoubtedly have refused. Comp. Rev. xix. 10 ; xxii. 9 ; Judg. xiii. 16. Here, however, instead of reproving Joshua for doing him too much honor, he commands him to do still more, by "loosing his shoes from off his feet ;" thus insisting upon the highest acknowledgment of the Divine presence which was in use among the Eastern nations. (3) From the place being made holy by his presence, which was the special prerogative of God, Ex. iii. 5 ; and (4) From his being expressly called "Jehovah," ch. vi. 2, which passage undoubtedly forms a part of the present narrative, as otherwise he must have appeared without any ostensible object, neither delivering any message, making any promise, nor uttering any command, except merely that Joshua should loose his shoes from his feet.—¶ *Over against him.* As if with a hostile intent, in somewhat of a threatening attitude. The same phrase in the original occurs Dan. x. 13, "The prince of the kingdom of Persia *withstood* me (Heb. "stood over against me.")"—¶ *With his drawn sword in his hand.* As a symbol of the character in which he was now to manifest himself in behalf of Joshua and Israel. So he is elsewhere termed, "A man of war," Ex. xv. 3. His appearing in this form would serve also not only to justify the war in which Joshua was now engaged, to show him that it was of God, who had given him his commission to kill and slay, but to encourage him to prosecute it with vigor. If God was for him who could be against him ?

—¶ *Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.* That is, "rolling," "rolling away." Gilgal was situated between Jericho and the river Jordan, about one

mile and a half, or two miles, from the former, and six from the latter. Nothing of this city now remains; but travellers are shown a pile of stones denominated *Galgala*, which, though at a considerable distance from the site of the ancient Gilgal, is supposed by some to be the monument erected by Joshua. The clause "unto this day," sufficiently indicates that the events related in the book of Joshua, or at least in this part of it, were not consigned to writing immediately upon their occurrence, but after the lapse of some considerable time.

9. *This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt.* It has been much disputed by commentators what is meant by "the reproach of Egypt." We take the expression in a very full sense, to mean *the reproach connected with Egypt*, in whatever way, whether actively or passively. (1) Actively; inasmuch as the Israelites themselves, while in the wilderness, did virtually reproach the Most High *in respect to the land of Egypt*, grieving that they had left it, wishing that they had died there, charging him with leading them out thence to slay them in the desert, and proposing to appoint a leader and to return thither. The 14th chapter of Numbers details these murmuring complaints, and shows that God was exceedingly angry with the people on this account, and would have destroyed them but for the intercession of Moses. But now the guilt of that conduct was to be rolled away or pardoned, they were no longer, on account of it, to be kept out of possession of the promised land; and not only so, they should never have any more the least occasion of inducement to vent such groundless reproaches.

THE CONQUEST OF JERICHO.

CHAPTER VI.

EXPLANATION OF CONNEXION. RAMS' HORNS. COMPASSING OF JERICHO. MEANS AND PRECEDENTS. DESTRUCTION OF MEN AND CATTLE IN JERICHO. DISPOSAL OF OBJECTIONS. RAHAB. MEMORIALS.

THIS chapter unfortunately does not begin where it ought. The commencement is properly at the first of the three preceding verses, that is, at the close of the fifth or immediately preceding chapter. In the second verse we read, "And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour." But it is in the previous chapter that we have the account of this special appearance of the Lord to Joshua, who, having manifested himself there, speaks to him as is narrated in this chapter. At the thirteenth verse of the previous chapter we read, "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand;" that is, as already explained,—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, appeared under the form of humanity, previous to his incarnation, with a sword drawn in his hand, indicating the consecration of Joshua for his mission as a soldier about to lead the hosts of Israel against what was assumed to be

an impregnable fortress. And Joshua said unto this Being, not knowing at first who he was, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" a very anxious and important question. This being answered, "Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come;" or, as it is in the margin, "The prince of the host of the Lord;" or, as it might be rendered in its equivalent, "As the Lord of hosts am I now come;" the moment he manifested himself as a Divine Being, assuming language that was peculiar to and inseparable from Deity, Joshua recognised the Illustrious Visitor as he had not before; "and fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?" Then the Captain of the Lord's host, or the Lord of hosts, or the Prince of the hosts of the Lord, said, "Loose thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy:" just as at the burning bush, a Divine Being, who called himself the Lord God of hosts, said to Moses, "Loose thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." So here, a Divine manifestation consecrated the place; and when that manifestation dissolved and disappeared, the place was restored as it was before. Thus we see the connexion. This Lord of hosts, who appears to Joshua, is represented saying, in the second verse of the sixth chapter, "And the Lord said unto Joshua," that is, the Being who appears to him, as narrated in the previous chapter. We thus see, that the common division is unhappy; and that the fifth chapter, which describes the Israelites undergoing the initiatory rite of the covenant of Israel, ought to have closed properly at the end of

the twelfth verse; and then the sixth chapter ought to have begun at the thirteenth verse of the fifth chapter.

Having seen the connexion, let us hear next a command addressed to Joshua by this Divine Being: "Ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days." The description is so minute and specific, that we can have no misapprehension of its meaning. The only phrase that demands some explanation is "rams' horns." It seems from the word, as if they were literally so. Now I believe they were, as the Hebrew word indeed denotes, trumpets of jubilee, jubilee trumpets; but they were called rams' horns, because shaped like rams' horns. There is a brass musical instrument still called a horn, though it is really made of brass. There is another musical instrument called a serpent, simply because it is in the form of a serpent. And there is mentioned here a musical instrument called a ram's horn; not that it was literally so, but that it was in the shape or form of a ram's horn. And these trumpets, thus called rams' horns,—called popularly after what they resembled,—but known ceremonially and ecclesiastically as the trumpets of jubilee, were instruments consecrated to announce the different feasts and festivals of the Jewish religion; and, therefore, had a definite, sacred, and solemn meaning. The command to Joshua was, that these trumpets should be blown; that the priests should carry the ark of the Lord; that they should compass the walls every day; and the last day seven times; and then the walls of the city should fall. Joshua did as he was commanded. I dare say the inhabitants of Jericho, when they saw

the procession marching round their walls, must have smiled with derision at such folly; and evidently concluded that there was no chance of an assault, or of their city being stormed by men that resorted to such means; little knowing that success is not in the instrument, but in the consecration of the instrument by Him whose power is omnipotent, and whose word is strong as deeds. The result was, that the walls fell flat to the ground when the people shouted and the priests blew with the trumpets: "and the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city."

"There never was so strange a siege as that of Jericho; here was no mound raised, no sword drawn, no engine planted, no pioneers undermining; here were trumpets sounded, but no enemy seen; here were armed men, but no stroke given; they must walk, and not fight; seven several days must they pace about the walls, which they may not once look over, to see what was within. Doubtless these inhabitants of Jericho made themselves merry with this sight. When they had stood six days on their walls, and beheld nothing but a walking enemy, 'What,' say they, 'could Israel find no walk to breathe them with but about our walls? Have they not travelled enough in their forty years' pilgrimage, but they must stretch their limbs in this circle? We see they are good footmen, but when shall we try their hands? Do these vain men think Jericho will be won by looking at it? Or do they only come to count how many paces it is about our city? If this be their manner of siege, we shall have no great cause to fear the sword of

Israel.' Wicked men think God in jest when he is preparing for their judgment."—*Bishop Hall*.

Now, if any one should say, Is this a precedent for us? would it do to adopt such a process as this in the East, and to imitate it, and expect that we should succeed? I answer, that would be an instance of what I call fanaticism. If God were to say to our armies and to their leaders, "Go and do what Joshua did, and walk in his footprints, and imitate his plan; and you shall succeed;" then it would be scepticism in our soldiers to refuse to do it. But as there is no such command, and no evidence of anything approaching to such a command; were our soldiers to do now what was peculiar to a special instance, with a special command and commission from heaven to sustain and back it; they would be guilty of the most flagrant fanaticism and folly. This shows us, that when we read the Bible, we must not take a fact as a precedent by cutting the fact out of the context; but we must look at the fact in all its ramifications, before, and after, and on each side, and see that we understand it; and apply it as enlightened men, in the exercise of good sense, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and humbly seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, should always do.

The next thought that occurs in reading this story, is the utter destruction of Jericho. They were to kill and to destroy both men, and women, and children, young and old, oxen, and sheep, and asses, with the edge of the sword. Now this seems a very cruel and a very awful occurrence; and the ordinary reader is so puzzled by it, because it seems to be the command of

God himself. In the first place, we obviate the difficulties that arise in our minds on first reading this, by recollecting that criminals are prosecuted for their crimes, and penalties inflicted proportionate to those crimes. We may be deeply distressed that a great public offender should be visited by a severe public sentence; but whilst our feelings are pained by the fact, our consciences acquiesce in the justice of the sentence. So here we see a most painful manifestation of Divine justice in the destruction of the whole population of a city; but you must take into connexion with this historic fact the circumstance, that these very people are expressly stated to have been polluted by every crime, to have been branded and stained by every wickedness; and, therefore, this execution was a great judicial sentence pronounced by the Judge of all the earth, who ever does right, upon a people who had by their crimes against heaven and against earth, and publicly upon the broad stage of the world, provoked the righteous judgments and the indignation of God. But on the other hand, to take another view of it, if you say, Why not spare women and children? you do not get rid of the difficulty by objecting to the Bible that records this. Do you not find, for instance, in the destruction of Sebastopol, that man, and woman, and child, must all have suffered? and there was no way, as far as we can see, of avoiding it. Do you not find, when plague or pestilence bursts upon a city, that woman and child, as well as man, suffer and are smitten down? And if it be true that God reigns in the world, then you ask, when he permits, or as some say, sends, the pestilence and the sword, why does he not protect women, and babes, and children,

from the terrible consequences? So that you observe, if there be a God at all, and if that God be cognisant of what is going on, and if that God has power to prevent what he does not prevent in the providential arrangements of the world every day, your argument against this being the inspiration of God, because it records such a fact as the destruction of Jericho, goes farther, and tells against the very existence of a God in the world; because under his government he does not prevent the same cruelties occurring every day. There are many things in God's book recorded, that are embosomed in difficulties; but are there no things in God's outer world transacted that are embosomed in equal difficulties? And you will find that every objection that you can wield against the fact that this is God's book, will just tell as powerfully against the fact that there is a God at all. And you will find the old story come out, that between the out-and-out Protestant and Evangelical Christianity, that accepts the Bible in its completeness as the rule of faith, and Christ the Saviour as the only name given among men whereby we can be saved, and the freezing, withering atheism of Voltaire, and of Hume, and of Rousseau, and others, there is no consistent standing place.

Having seen the destruction of the city, let me notice an instance of God's mercy in the midst of it. You remember the promise that was made by the spies to Rahab, which we considered at the time when we read the chapter that records it, that she should be spared. They were true to their word. Joshua gave strict orders that she and all near and dear to her should be spared. And it is recorded in order to show that if God is faithful in executing his righteous

retributions, he is no less faithful in dealing mercy and lovingkindness to those that trust in him. It is twice repeated, that "Joshua saved her alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel unto this day."

But why so extraordinary a scene about this city, and not about the other cities of Canaan? The answer is, this was the frontier city of Canaan; it was the stronghold of the Canaanites; it was the key, as it were, to the country; and the destruction of this Jericho, was, therefore, signalised by a special miracle. That other questions arise in connexion with this, is quite true. Why the God that clave the Red Sea, and divided the Jordan, did not at once transport them from the desert into the full possession of the land of Canaan, we cannot answer. All we know is, that he did not do so; and that the record is, that he did not do so.

The occurrences here mentioned are spoken of as remaining in their memorials unto this day; and Rahab also amongst them. Now that shows that this was written whilst the generation spoken of in it was then alive; and if it were a falsehood, it would have been then contradicted; some tradition or record of such contradiction would have existed. And, therefore, that statement is so far, I do not say it is triumphantly so, but it is so far, a proof of the authenticity and genuineness of the narrative.

THE CAPTURE OF AI.

CHAPTER VII.

A REVERSE. PUBLIC SIN. JOSHUA SINS. ERROR. RASHNESS OF CONDUCT. DEPRESSION. COURSE OF DUTY. PRAYER AND WORK. ACHAN. CRIME AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

WE have seen in the course of our reading of the previous chapter, how the Israelites conducted themselves when attended with victory and with great success. We have in this chapter their experience of a reverse; and we see in it how they acted; and what was the cause, as pointed out by the finger of God himself, for this terrible and disastrous reverse which they then experienced. "The children of Israel," it is stated in the first verse, "committed a trespass."

"*Committed a trespass.* Heb. יִמְמְלוּ יִמְמַל yimmelu maal, *had prevaricated a prevarication.* The sin of an individual is imputed to the whole people. This is on the ground of the constituted oneness of social and ecclesiastical bodies. A people, properly speaking, is but one moral person. No man, in sinning, can be sure that the consequences will stop with himself. For aught he knows, they may affect the whole extent of his relations; and this ought to make us watchful both over ourselves and others, that we neither commit nor countenance deeds that may spread desolation over the bosom of a whole community. Ch. xxii. 20—
'Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass

in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel?’ ‘So venomous is sin, especially when it lights among God’s people, that one drachm of it is able to infect the whole mass of Israel.’ ”—*Bishop Hall.*

Now it is obvious to all who read the chapter, that it was not the race, or the nation, or the people, that personally committed the sin; but Achan, a leading person in the midst of them. And we are here taught by this, that one individual who is guilty of a great and scandalous transgression, connived at in a body, as in the host of Israel, provokes on all the just and righteous indignation of God; and Israel as a people is dealt with judicially as having sinned, because one was suffered to continue in the midst of them, who had flagrantly disobeyed the express commandment of God. This shows us that every congregation, every city, every army, every nation, has an interest, not only in the conduct of the whole, but in the conduct and deportment of each individual who constitutes a fragment, however obscure, of that whole.

“*Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day.*” This is said in allusion to the words of the warning, ch. vi. 18, ‘Lest ye make the camp of Israel a curse and *trouble* it.’ From this circumstance, his name *Achan* seems to have been changed to *Achar, trouble*, i.e., *troubler*—1 Chron. ii. 7. How strikingly did Achan’s conduct verify the saying of Solomon, Prov. xv. 27—‘He that is greedy of gain *troubleth* his own house;’ and how clear from this instance is it, that sin is a very *troublesome*, as well as a very wicked thing, and that not only to the sinner himself, but to all around him.

When Ahab met Elijah, he cried, in the consciousness of his own offences, 'Art thou he that *troubleth* Israel?' 'I have not *troubled* Israel,' answered the indignant prophet, 'but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord.' Such was virtually the language of Joshua to Achan on this occasion. '*And all Israel stoned him with stones.*' The burning, therefore, commanded, ver. 15, must have reference to the dead body. He was first stoned, and his carcass then consigned to the flames, himself and all his sharing the same fate. 'He perished not alone in his iniquity.' The punishment is said to have been executed by 'all Israel,' not because every individual without exception had a hand in it, but because all were present as spectators, all were consenting to the act, and as many as could be were active agents in it, in the name of the rest. This showed the universal detestation of the deed, and their anxiety to avert from them the Divine displeasure."—*Bush*.

We read that after this, and apart altogether from this sin, Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, on the east side of Bethel; and spake unto them, saying, "Go up and view the country." Here for the first time we notice in the conduct of Joshua a disregard of God, and omission to appeal to him, and to seek direction and guidance from him. Apparently on his own responsibility, without even mentioning the name of God, he gives commandment to go up and view Ai, and come back and report what it was. An enterprise begun without prayer to God, too frequently terminates without a blessing from God. Whatever we do, public, social, national, should

be begun, continued, and ended in him ; and thus we may expect it will be blessed by him.

These persons came back ; and with all the feeling of self-confidence, evidently generated by their victory over Jericho, and a self-confidence that made them forget and pass over those precautions that became them, they returned and said, “ Why, the people of Ai are but a handful ; ” reasoning very probably in this way : “ If the walls of Jericho fell down before us, and we took possession of it without the loss of a single man, we may send up a mere handful of soldiers to attack this city of Ai ; and there is not the least doubt that that handful will be more than is wanted for its utter and entire desolation.” Thus men are very often so elated with past victory that they forget those precautions that a sober and an enlightened mind would suggest, in order to obtain future victories also.

The result of this was, that having sent up an inadequate number of men,—not having asked God’s presence to go with them,—having apparently no commission in this special instance to make this assault,—the children of Israel were beaten,—they were chased from before the gate ; and the hearts of the people, yesterday too elated with their easy victory, were now too depressed with an incidental disaster. Joshua was no less so. He now turned to God, rent his clothes, prayed unto him ; thus showing that prosperity made him forget God ; adversity brought him to his senses, and made him turn to God. It is so strange, that man begins to pray when he suffers ; and so often forgets to praise or pray when he prospers. He argued with God ; “ O Lord God, wherefore hast thou brought

this people over Jordan?" Now a great deal of this prayer that Joshua prayed was most unworthy of a Christian; a great deal of it was, in fact, blaming God for his past guidance. "Wherefore hast thou brought this people over Jordan?" Why, it was God's own command that they should cross the Jordan. "Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan." How often is this the feeling of men still. When they meet with disaster, defeat, or disappointment, in their over-sanguine expectations, they say, "Would to God we had never entered on this business; would to God we had never undertaken this matter; would to God we had taken another course altogether." Whereas, if you are quite sure at the commencement of the course, that it is the way of duty, no disaster in the midst of it should make you swerve one moment to the right hand or to the left. If you are involved in a war; if that war was begun on right principles, on right grounds, and from reasonable and intelligent contemplation; if you are sure that you were right at the beginning: then no disaster for one moment should make you swerve; do your duty, which always pays the penalty of suffering in this fallen world; and be sure that a course begun in God, over which you implore his blessing, however it may be for a moment ominous, threatening, sad, will be in the issue all that God has promised, and that you can possibly require.

But, he argues in one part of this prayer, however, very properly, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" appealing to God's glory. Well, the Lord said to Joshua, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" What does this show us?

That he spent time in prayer which he ought to have spent in duty. It is as bad to pray and not to work, as it is to work and not to pray; and you may depend upon it, that a long prayer is no excuse for the neglect or the postponement of an instant duty. The general of an army is not to have his prayer book for his sword; he is not, in the time, and call, and summons of battle, to begin to pray, instead of leading his troops. Duty has its time, prayer has its time: common sense will show the distinction; and an enlightened and Christian mind will not pray the less, that he toils and labours the more. And, therefore, Joshua was told by God not to lie there praying all day, but to get up, and attend to the duties that were instant and imminent. "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing;" that accursed thing was alluded to in the previous chapter; where God said, "Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho;" and all that was in Jericho, too, was devoted unto the Lord, and he should be cursed who should appropriate any portion of it unto himself.

God says, "Sanctify the people;" that is, Set them apart, separate them, and see and find out who and where are the guilty persons; and sanctify yourselves also,—get ready and prepare yourselves ceremonially, to appear before the Lord.

God lays down a prescription for finding out the dishonest person; they should begin with the nation; then they should find out the tribe; then, in that tribe, the family; and in that family the man. And the result was, that "Achan, the son of Carmin,

the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken." He confessed to the sin; and there is reason to believe that while he suffered the penalties of that transgression upon earth, his confession, so ingenuous, so candid, implied a genuine repentance, and did not therefore involve the ruin of his soul. For we must always notice in this world, when a great crime is committed, if the great criminal should have his sins forgiven in heaven, that does not intercept the projecting of the shadow of that crime in this world.

The consequence was, that "Joshua took Achan, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor." It has been supposed, and I think it is the most probable supposition, that Achan himself, and the goods, the garment, the gold, the oxen, the asses, and the sheep also, were destroyed; and that his family were not destroyed with him.

SIN CONFESSED, AND GOD GLORIFIED.

“And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him ; and tell me now what thou hast done ; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done.”—JOSHUA vii. 19, 20.

WE have seen in the course of our study of the chapter as a whole, how an infallible finger, almost visibly pointed from the skies, touches the head of the guilty one, and brings Achan forward into the very midst of the camp of Israel, as accessory personally, and most culpably, to this great transgression. There was no human verdict, because there was no human investigation previously required. There was no circumstantial evidence, or witnesses examined ; but divinely, miraculously, and of course not now exemplified in our courts, Achan is singled out as being guilty, first of transgressing a clear law ; secondly, appropriating a thing that was devoted to destruction ; and thirdly, bringing down upon the whole camp and children of Israel the righteous retribution and just penalties of Almighty God.

Joshua, in the verses I have selected as the subject of a few reflections, when he saw that Achan was

detected, addresses him with all the calmness and the self-possession of a judge ; and yet with all the affectionate sympathy of a man, a parent, and a brother. He speaks tenderly to Achan, guilty as he was, alone guilty ; he breaks out into no words of violent recrimination. Joshua felt and knew that in Achan's own bosom there was the sense of a penalty that needed no human words to aggravate, no censure of his to render more intense. He therefore addresses this detected criminal in these words ; " My son." And why should it not be so ? The stern duties of a judge do not necessarily dry up the tears and the sympathies of a man. There may be the deepest detestation of the crime, combined with the tenderest and the keenest compassion in favour of the unhappy criminal. The crime you may detest ; the criminal you need not load with abuse, you need not exasperate with invective. Depend upon it he suffers enough, without the infliction of our invectives, or the caricature of the thoughtless, or those that triumph in the detection of the criminal, and have probably very little intense hatred towards the crime.

All crime has two aspects ; one of guilt, undiluted guilt, that we cannot brand too severely ; the other of misfortune, terrible, disastrous misfortune, that we cannot sympathise with too keenly. And, therefore, the two feelings, reprobation of the crime, pity for the criminal, are not incompatible. The reprobation of the crime is a reflection from heaven ; pity for the criminal is a sympathy instinctive in the human heart : and you may depend upon it, where there is the purest reprobation of a great crime, there will always be in the deep and silent recesses of the heart the

purest and the most tender sympathy with the misfortune of a great criminal.

The two acts that were enjoined on Achan by Joshua were, first, disclosure of his sin to God—"Make confession to God ;" and, secondly, a disclosure of his crime to him, and, therefore, to all Israel. Why should he enjoin these two things ? It is very important to investigate the reason of this. There are two effects that flow from sin. There is, first, its abhorrence in the sight of God ; and there is, secondly, the injury which it inflicts upon mankind. Sin dishonours God, and injures mankind. And, therefore, as sin against God, it is to be confessed to him ; and as far as it is injury towards man, it is to be acknowledged and confessed to man. Sin in its aspect toward God is not to be confessed to man ; nor to be confessed to a priest. You are not to seek absolution in such a case from a priest, he has no power to give it. The words of David are literally and strictly true ; "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned ;" to Uriah have I done injury. And, therefore, sin, as against God, no priest or prelate can absolve from ; God only can : but sin as injury towards a fellow man is to be confessed to the injured man, and from him you are to seek forgiveness of it. It is by recollecting this distinction, that you will see that the confession of your sin to man is not to man as armed with sacerdotal authority, as competent to absolve from either its penalty or its consequences ; but as to a person who is injured. And if a priest, therefore, ask you to confess your sins to him, your answer must be, If I have injured you, I will ; and wherein I have injured you I will ; and from you, as injured by me, I will ask for-

givenness ; but to confess sin to you as a priest whom I have not injured, and from whom, therefore, I have to ask no forgiveness, is to put the priest in the place of God, and to forget the express commandment of heaven, that to Him only are we to confess our sins, and from Him only are we to seek forgiveness. You can see, therefore, why Joshua required Achan to confess his sin, first, to God, as a great crime committed in his sight ; and, secondly, to him, as the representative of all the children of Israel. If it should be argued, that the words, "And hide not from me what thou hast done," do imply that the sin was sacramentally confessed to Joshua, the answer is, that Joshua was a soldier, and not a priest ; and therefore it cannot be any precedent for confession of sin to an ecclesiastical officer of any sort, or shape, or degree.

Let us notice, in the next place, as obvious here, what shades and darkens the glory of God and breaks through the express precepts of his law, inflicts, by a necessary reaction, injury, disaster, and misfortune upon mankind. The crime traced to Achan had drawn a cloud over the shining countenance of God ; and conducted down from the bosom of that God the lightning of just and righteous retribution. Sin is the ruin of a nation, disaster to an army, decay to a church, injury to all who connive at it, sympathise with it, or directly or indirectly are implicated in it. The sins committed by a nation, by its rulers, its judges, its magistrates, its leading people ; by its schools, its universities, are not restricted in their influence to the localities where they take place. The sin perpetrated in the light of day in the midst of our

country, may have its shadow and its reaction in the most distant East and battle-fields in which we may be engaged. It has been always found that sin in a nation is ruin; but where there is righteousness distinguishing a nation through all its national functionaries, officers, representatives, it conducts down a blessing; even life that shall never end. But here we see that an individual sin unrebuked in the camp, sent forth defeat, disaster, and ruin. And probably the reason why the sin of an individual thus brought down upon the corporate body the judgments of heaven, may in all probability have been, that it was connived at; and that many knew of it who would not disclose it; and that Joshua, whose business it was to see to the moral condition as well as the discipline of his army, failed to make the efforts that became him to find out that sin. A nation may be rich in goods; but if poor in righteousness, it is weak. A nation may have great learning in its schools, and it may have great genius in its rulers, and great prosperity in its commerce; but if some great sin is penetrating its heart, tainting its conscience, it will reap disaster in the field, even if its troops be the bravest; and it will find a worm at the root of its commerce, that will ultimately gnaw it and level it with the dust. A soldier must not only have a bright sword, but a clean hand to wield it: a nation must not only have a right cause, but it must be in a right state in the sight of God, in order even on a right cause to draw down a great and lasting blessing. And therefore, when you see suffering, disaster, reverse; wherever you see commercial prosperity begin to pine; wherever you hear the

clamours of the poor, or the oppressed, or the discontented become loud, and frequent, and long ; you should instantly begin to ask, Is there a reason for this ? What is the Achan in the camp that troubles it ? What sin is there in our nation's heart, conscience, or habits, that thus provokes and awakens the sleeping judgments of God. If we find some great national sin, let us confess, renounce, abjure it. If we do not,—and we ought to be slow to specify where specification is so delicate and difficult,—if we find no special national sin, then we may hope our affliction is the chastisement of a Parent that loves his own, not the retribution of a Judge who punishes his enemies.

Another lesson that we have to learn from this incident—and it lies upon the very surface of it—is, no crime, however secretly perpetrated, however carefully folded in concealing circumstance, however alone the individual may have felt when he committed that crime, can possibly be concealed from the sight of an omniscient, omnipresent God. No sagacity of detective police may track it ; no witness, ready to proclaim it, may behold it ; the thick night may have wrapped you ; silence and secrecy may seem to have been your only companions ; but upon you and upon that crime, that act of dishonesty, there was a bright, burning, omniscient eye, as intensely upon you, as cognisant of what you were doing, as thoroughly versed in all the motives, ends, wiles, schemes, plans, wickedness, that led to it, as if you, the sinner, and God, the searcher of the heart, were the only twain in the whole universe. What a solemn thought, that there is no such thing as being alone ; and thus we

should never do alone, as we suppose, what we should shrink from doing if an amphitheatre filled with all the spectators of a nation were gazing upon us. God's eye is everywhere and always upon us. What a solemn Psalm is the 139th Psalm—how searching the thoughts placed before us! "O Lord, thou hast searched me;" searched my feelings, my sympathies, my affections, my conscience, my intellect, my heart; and thou hast not failed in thy search, like mortal men, but "thou hast known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." What an idea is here! Sometimes we have a thought not shaped, not formed, dimly looming, as it were, in the distant horizon of the mind; before that thought is seized, grasped, and clothed in shape, God sees its beginning, its middle, and its close. "Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted,"—not with all my public ways, all my official ways,—but "art acquainted with *all* my ways. There is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." Then, exclaims the sinner, pierced, penetrated, encompassed, with this searching, this irresistible, omniscience, "Whither, then, shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell,"—supposing I could do so—"thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me;" on its untrodden shores, in its desert places, its solitary isles, even there shall thy hand, which stretches everywhere, lead

me, and thy right hand hold me. "If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." What a searching, sifting, expression of God's presence is that Psalm! A deep and early conviction of this thought, "I never am alone," would be a most powerful restraint from evil, a most overwhelming incentive to good. Go into the counting house; step on the stones of the Royal Exchange; enter your shop, and take your place behind the counter; enter your closet; your family; go where duty calls you, or where circumstances may carry you; there try to feel, there labour to recollect, "Thou, God, seest me:" a lesson, not for Hagar, the sorrowful sufferer in the desert, but for the crowd collected in the camp. And this God not only sees us, not only hears gentle words to his ear reverberating louder than the loud thunder, but he sees with searching anatomy every thought and feeling. And before that holy, burning, searching eye, riveted and fastened this moment upon each individual heart, as if there were only one worshipper on earth, covetousness is idolatry; the dishonest desire is theft; revenge is fratricide and murder; and an impure look, adultery. What a holy Being have we to deal with! What a holy religion must this be: what holy impressions ought it to strike upon the most thoughtless and inconsiderate of mankind!

Another truth we learn from this, and a very important one it is too; I clothe it in Scripture's own words: "The sinner's sin will find him out." The meaning is, that one sin, deliberately cherished till it builds its nest and finds its shelter in some

cranny or nook of the human heart, loved, fed, perpetually cherished, instantly begins its most disastrous action. It makes the passions all plead for it with persuasive eloquence: after the passions have long pleaded for keeping this lodger that you have not the courage to cast out, and yet that you dare not altogether justify and applaud, conscience, trodden hard by the feet of passion, begins to be silent or insensible, and to tolerate what once it would have detested, and to put up with as a convenience, what once it would have roused itself against and resisted till it had utterly destroyed it. And wherever—and the young should never forget this—there is one sin, it needs enormous skill to keep it secret from man; and so complicated, so persistent is one sin, that to keep all quiet, it needs another to stand by it; and to keep both sins from detection, it needs some dozen to rise up and stand round as sentinels. One sin thus tolerated brings in so many with it, and so saps the principles, so completely undermines the earliest, deepest, holiest, best convictions of the heart, that eventually you go on reckless of quiet, protecting it, and stopping at nothing that will conceal it; till covetousness becomes theft, and theft becomes robbery, and robbery breaks forth upon a gigantic scale, and murder crowns all; and what at first was as the letting out of a little water for the moment, becomes at last the overwhelming flood that carries the criminal into entire and absolute destruction. We see, therefore, that by the nature and necessity of the thing, successful resistance of a sin, whatever that sin may be, must be made at the beginning; for habit, as you have often heard, is a second

nature: its chain at first is so frail that the gossamer rightly expresses it; but ultimately the chain becomes so powerful that it needs omnipotence itself to break it. We see this in the case of Achan: however carefully he hid the Babylonish garment in his tent, however skilfully he managed to keep quiet what he knew in his conscience to be a sin; in ways utterly unexpected by him, as will be the case to the end of the world, the sin came out; and he stands before us an illustration of the words: "Be sure that the sinner's sin will find him out."

Let us remark the command of Joshua; that by thus confessing the sin of which he had been guilty to his God: by thus making known that sin to all the camp of Israel, on whom he had provoked the judgments of God, he would, in the language of Joshua, give glory to God. "My son, give glory to God." Now it is very remarkable that this confession, or acknowledgment of God, is in various parts of Scripture associated with giving him glory. We read that the centurion at the foot of the Cross, when he saw what was done, glorified God. But how did he glorify him? "Saying, Certainly this was a righteous man:" that is, the acknowledgment of the innocence of that unprecedented Sufferer: an acknowledgment or a confession thus gives glory to God. We find in the gospel according to St. John, the same idea illustrated in the case of the blind man. "Then again the Pharisees called the man that was blind," who persisted in saying that Jesus had healed him, "saying unto him, Give God the praise," or the glory: "we know that this man is a sinner." Now at first this seems unintelligible; but it means, "Give God the praise, by acknowledging

that you have been cheating and deceiving us ; ” just as Achan acknowledged that he had stolen the Babylonish garment. “ Give God the glory by owning yourself a great liar and a great sinner ; for it is utterly impossible that this man ever could have opened the eyes of one that was born blind.” Thus the acknowledgment of sin is especially indicated in these two passages, as in some sense or shape giving glory to God. In what sense does it do so ? First, he that owns his sin, and acknowledges his guilt in the sight of God, and that sin is what God describes it to be, gives glory to God in this respect, in that he owns God’s estimate of sin to be precisely his. It is no unripe good, as the Pantheist calls it, it is no transient evil ; he who acknowledges sin to God who has depicted it in the Bible, so far acknowledges it is a taint on his glory, an obstruction to his plans, the fever that racks the world, the worm that dies not, the fuel of the fire that is not quenched. And in the second place, he who thus confesses to God, gives glory to him by his confession that sin is justly and not excessively visited, when it is followed by all the penal consequences that God attaches to it. In other words, when the sinner says, “ Sin is worthy of its wages ; and when thou hast paid sin its wages, which are death, thou hast not meted out an excessive retribution, but thou hast dealt justly and righteously.” The true Christian and the unbeliever are in this respect immensely at issue. The unbeliever thinks sin so trivial a thing, that he cannot understand how it is so terribly visited ; the Christian sees sin to be so heinous that he cannot but be amazed that it ever is

so gloriously pardoned. The one dishonours God by doubting his justice, suspecting his impartiality and love, in so punishing sin; the other gives glory to God, by adoring the love, the justice, and the truth, that pardon sin through Christ in the greatest sinner, and yet punish sin in the impenitent and the unbelieving with eternal banishment from his presence. In the next place, sin gives glory to God, inasmuch as it magnifies and makes known his mercy and his justice in forgiving it. I need not repeat what I have often said, that to give glory to God is not to contribute something to God: that is impossible. He is infinite in the possession of every imaginable excellence, glory, and perfection. When, therefore, we give glory to God, it is by making God known; by attesting and stating that God is what he is depicted to be in the Bible; and that his word is yea and amen, as inspired and written there. He therefore gives the greatest glory to an infinite Being, who unfolds most of that glory to a world that is otherwise blind, or ignorant, or insensible to it. And therefore we give glory to God, when, by receiving forgiveness of sin, we let forth the lustre of his justice and his truth in doing it. You have it in these words, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; but if we confess our sins,"—it does not mean, then, God is faithful, for he always is faithful; but it means, he is then shown to be,—if we confess our sins God is then shown to be "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Therefore, in every case in which we confess sin, and seek absolution for that sin from Him who alone can give it, we show forth, not only his mercy, not

only his love, but his justice, his faithfulness, and truth, in the forgiveness of sin. The very attributes that seem utterly incompatible with pardon of sin, namely, justice and holiness, are shown by the pardon of sin through the blood of sprinkling to be, not only compatible, but to be covered with the richest and the most enduring splendour. Nay, when Moses wanted God to put forth most of his glory, what did God do? "And the Lord passed by, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." There is God's glory. And therefore, when you want to see God's glory, gaze not at the stars, the sleepless sentinels, the inextinguishable lights of the sky; look not at the earth, covered with its summer splendour: but look at Christ. And when you see, and still more when you taste, and still more when you stand before the Church and the world, a living monument of having felt and realised this blessed truth, that the Lord is to you "merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;" you thereby reflect God's glory; and the world, smitten by the splendour and magnificence of the spectacle, will exclaim as it witnesses it, "Who is a God like unto our God? who pardoneth sin, who passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage; who keepeth not his anger for ever: who delighteth in mercy." If, therefore, you want, though the world may sneer at it, to see reflected and beaming forth the richest flood of Divine glory, do

not look at the crystals of a pebble, the petals of a flower, the great sea, the round earth, the exquisite organism of the human body, the starry host in the sky, all the structures of nature, which are so many, and so varied, and so beautiful; but if you want to see the greatest glory of God reflected from an earthly object, go and see some sinner who can say, "I have all the blessedness of that man whose sins are forgiven, whose transgressions are covered, and unto whom the Lord imputeth no iniquity."

And then, we also give glory to God inasmuch as we show and make known what is the source and channel, or medium, of the transmission of that forgiveness. Wherever there is confession of sin; wherever there is real, earnest petition for pardon, it is always inseparable from the Atonement made upon the Cross; and that Atonement is the richest expression of how much God loved us; the greatest proof how infinite that holiness that could not pardon the least sin till the Son of God had died upon the Cross; how intense that love that did not shrink from giving Christ to be a sacrifice, in order that sinners might be saved. And when we see all this revealed to us in the forgiveness of that sin which we confess, we see mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other; and an era of glory around Calvary that has no precedent in the past, and no parallel in the present; the great and spotless mirror of the glory of our Father. And what a happy thought is this; that God's glory and my happiness are inseparably intertwined. The foolish sceptic smiles at the very idea of doing anything for the glory of God; but the truth is, when we do

a thing for the glory of God, we do what contributes to our own greatest happiness. God has so knit the two together, that he will not allow you to taste the sweetest joy unless he receive from it also the greatest or corresponding glory. The chief end of man, to glorify God, so well expressed in the Catechism, has underlying it another great truth collateral with it, namely, that man's chief happiness consists in doing so. God is glorified in such confession of sin as that to which we have referred, by the sinner pardoned instantly setting out to prosecute every effort and to seize every opportunity of trying to make others taste what he himself has tasted. Now this is a great law. There is no such thing as Christianity in the heart without liberality in the hand; or, at least in some shape, the employment of the gifts, whatever they may be, that God has given us. When we beg for different objects, we ask money, because that is, not in quantity, but in some measure, the most universal thing. But what is meant when we ask you to live for God, is, that whatever be the gift that you have, that you should consecrate to his service. Every person has not money to give. Many in these times have so much to do for themselves and their families that they have nothing over. Well, you are not expected thus to give. But have you a spare hour for teaching in a Sunday School? have you a spare hour for visiting ragged and other schools, and by your presence countenancing and encouraging them? Or can you speak a word; have you the gift of persuasion; can you in some shape plead for what is good? Or if you have neither eloquence nor money, have you a holy and consistent life? Then "let your light so shine before

men that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." In short, if a person is only thoroughly impressed with a sense of obligation and responsibility, he will find out that he has either in his head, or in his heart, or in his prayers, or in his person, or in his talents, or in his gifts, or in his graces, something that he can dedicate and devote to the glory of Him who hath redeemed him.

But if we refuse to glorify God as lights shining in the firmament of heaven, we must glorify God as burning amid the miseries of the lost. It is a great law we never should forget, that God is not dependent upon us for the achievement of his purposes, for the fulfilment of his prophecies. God will receive the glory due unto him whether we take a part in contributing to it or not. For what does the prophet Jeremiah say? He says, "Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains; and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death." We gather from these words, that if a man do not give glory to God by confessing his sin, and obtaining pardon for that sin, and setting forth the praises of Him who hath redeemed him, it is not true that he will never give glory to God; he will give it after death, only in a very terrible form. In other words, we may give glory to God now as a free will offering; if we withhold it, we must give glory to God hereafter, among the lost, as an agonising exaction. Let us, then, praise and show forth the praises of Him who hath called us from darkness into his marvellous light; let us feel it is privilege, and not pain. Let us feel, and never forget, that living just as becomes a Christian

is giving glory to God. He that makes God most known by his own character; he that contributes to spread furthest, widest, deepest, the Gospel of Christ by his efforts, gives the greatest glory to him. And above all, he that confesses his sin, and seeks pardon for it in the name of Christ, and goes out, however private, obscure, or lowly, to lead a life corresponding to so great a privilege, gives glory to God as a son of God, and as a joyous offering; and his feet will never stumble on the dark mountains, nor his light be turned into the shadow of death.

May God imprint these precious truths upon our hearts; and to his name be praise, and honour, and glory. Amen.

JOSHUA'S SUCCESS AND PIETY.

CHAPTER VIII.

MIRACLES AND MEANS. JOSHUA ENCOURAGED. GOD'S PROMISE
AND MAN'S EXERTIONS. STRATAGEM. PUNISHMENT OF THE
KING OF AI. JOSHUA'S ALTAR. JOSHUA READS THE BIBLE.

IT does seem to ordinary readers of the Bible a very perplexing inquiry why God levelled the walls of Jericho by a special miracle in one case, and had recourse to the employment of the ordinary means, of siege, and stratagem, in another and not very different case. It may be very fairly asked, Why did not God destroy all the cities of Canaan by his word, just as he did Jericho? We cannot answer; all we know is that the inspired historian records the fact that Jericho was levelled to the dust by an instantaneous interposition of Almighty power; and that Ai, another city, probably not so populous or strong, was laid siege to, was regularly invested, and that stratagem and ambush were employed; and only by these means was Joshua successful in removing the second obstruction in his march into the Promised Land, and towards Jerusalem, the city and the vision of peace. The distinctive facts are here; why and wherefore the distinction was made we have no means of knowing; and where God is silent, it seems inexpedient that we should too curiously inquire.

Here we find God addressing Joshua, "Fear not ; neither be thou dismayed." You recollect what had just occurred ; the sin of Achan, the judgment on the camp, the sufferings and the reverses of the whole army. Joshua was naturally depressed ; inclined, perhaps, under forebodings and fears, to give way and to retreat. The Lord appears to the soldier, cheers him with comforting words ; renews the promise he had made to him before : "Fear not, I am with thee : neither be thou dismayed : take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai : see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land : " that is, I have determined to do so. Now we can see one lesson here of some value. First, the absolute promise that Joshua and his troops should conquer Ai did not supersede the vigorous employment of the means that common sense, and ordinary prudence, and military knowledge, suggested for the destruction of that city ; proving that God's decree to accomplish a thing is so interwoven with man's use of means in seeking to attain that thing, that as far as we individually are concerned we have no right to expect success without the use of means ; while we are not warranted to expect success in consequence of means without seeking the power and presence of God.

The plan adopted to destroy Ai requires comment. There was here what would strictly be called deception. It is evident that the troops of Joshua made as though they were beaten, and ran from the city ; but for the purpose only of deceiving and decoying the soldiers within who were defending the walls, and exposing them on each flank to be beaten by their

foes; and to enable those foes, at Joshua's signal of a banner hoisted on a spear, to rush in, take possession of the stronghold, and make themselves masters of all the spoils. Now it does seem to us inconsistent with the law of God that deception should be practised; and yet by the consent of all nations upon earth such stratagems are held proper in war, and are not branded as social crimes: we have here a precedent of stratagem, which in social and individual life would be altogether wrong, seeming, however, right and legitimate in such circumstances as those in which Joshua was placed. Such a stratagem may therefore warrantably be practised by armies in the field of battle, and at the siege of great strongholds.

"Lay thee an ambush for the city behind it. That is, on the west side of the city; as the Israelites, at the time of receiving this command, were on the east side of it, and the Orientals, in designating the relative position of places, were always supposed to face the east. This stratagem is to be justified on the ground that God commanded it, and it is obvious that if it was right for them to overpower their enemies, it was equally right to outwit them, if they could do it."—*Bush.*

"No treaties were violated, no oaths broken, no falsehoods uttered; and it cannot be requisite to inform our enemies of our intentions and purposes, however they may be deceived by appearances. But perjuries, lies, and infractions of treaties cannot, in any war or in any case, be allowable or excusable."—*Scott.*

We find after this successful stratagem all the inhabitants were put to the sword, and the king of Ai

himself put to death first. The king was specially guilty: as in those days, and among the nations of Canaan, despotism prevailed, and the king's word was the law, the authority, and the only reason for the conduct of the people; the guiltiest, therefore, was visited with the most exemplary punishment. If it should be asked why all the people should be put to death, the answer is that this same book tells us that the crimes of Canaan had risen up to heaven; that the people were singularly debased, corrupt, and demoralized; and the infliction of so severe a penalty upon them in both Jericho and Ai was not the gratification of a private or individual revenge, or the infliction of the vengeance of national jealousy; but the fulfilment of a just judicial sentence pronounced in heaven, of which Joshua and his soldiers were but the anointed and consecrated executioners.

After this Joshua built an altar to the Lord; the symbol of worship, of sacrifice, of atonement; suggestive, therefore, of his need of the forgiveness of sins, and his application for it.

“30. *Joshua built an altar—in Mount Ebal.* This was in obedience to the command given Deut. xxvii. 42-48. Mount Ebal, as well as Mount Gerizim, was situated near Shechem in what was afterwards the tribe of Ephraim, and not far from the ancient Samaria. It was at a considerable distance from the camp at Gilgal, yet as it was a ceremony that had been expressly commanded, and the performance of which was not to be delayed any longer than was absolutely necessary after they had entered Canaan, Deut. xxvii. 2, they seem to have penetrated in a body through the mountainous regions that inter-

vened till they came to the appointed place, although no details of the journey thither are given. Viewed in connexion with their then present circumstances the incident was a remarkable one. While engaged in the mid career of conquest, the business of the war is suddenly suspended, and instead of pushing their victories on every side, after mastering the frontier towns, they commence a peaceful march into the heart of the country to attend upon a religious solemnity! But God had ordered it, and they cheerfully obeyed. Whatsoever else stands still, the service of God must go forward. Whatever other interests may suffer, our spiritual concerns must receive attention. But in truth there is no danger that our worldly interests *will* suffer in consequence of a paramount regard to the one thing needful. God will take them into his own hand, and see that we are no losers by anything done for him. In the present instance, we see that his providential care was wonderfully exercised towards his faithful servants. Though in the midst of an enemy's country, as yet unconquered, yet they passed on unharmed, the terror of God having fallen upon the cities round about, as when Jacob some ages before had passed through this very region on his way to Bethel, Gen. xxxv. 5. The way of duty is the way of safety."—*Bush*.

Joshua collected all the families together; his soldiers, the women and children, and all the congregation; and did what? Read the Word of God in the midst of them. Here is a general of an army, with gigantic responsibilities upon his head, and many cares in his heart, and with enough to occupy his hands; yet that general does not shrink from practising

on the field the noblest ornament of his character, the most sacred obligation upon his soul—the worship of God, the reading of his holy Word; the instruction of his troops in the tactics of a higher soldiership than Cæsar or Cæsar’s empire knows. If any have happened to read in the newspaper the letter of a very fiery priest in Ireland, they find him stating that our generals, the generals of Britain, in the Crimea, were a set, I use his words, “of psalm singing and Bible reading soldiers.” What he urges as a libel is that they are a set of psalm singing and Bible reading soldiers. Now here is a Bible reading soldier under God’s own sanction; and here is a worshipping army in God’s own presence. And yet Joshua and his troops were not cowards because they were pious; they did not less attend to the articles of war because they lived according to the will and the law of God. And it will be found still that the general and troops that fear God are not less loyal to their Queen, less dutiful to their orders, less successful in the hour of conflict and of trial. At all events, we have here a most illustrious precedent of a distinguished soldier, with great responsibility, feeling that he had not fulfilled all the obligations of his position, unless, in addition to leading his troops to victory, he read in the hearing of them all God’s holy Word. And this brave and pious soldier leaves a precedent we shall do well to imitate in similar circumstances and of which we will treat in our next reading.

THE WORDS OF THE LAW.

“And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law,” &c.—JOSHUA viii. 34, 35.

THESE words present a beautiful and practical example for all true Christians in every position and relationship of life in reference to the use of God's holy Word, and the obligation of making it known to those with whom they are connected.

Joshua had frequent supernatural light to direct him; he had constant communication with the God who was with Moses, and promised to be continually with him; and yet, notwithstanding that supernatural light so frequently given to this illustrious leader of the host of Israel, there must have been in his hands, or at least accessible to him, a copy of the written Scriptures, as far as those Scriptures were written or committed to a permanent shape under the superintendence and inspiration of God. If, then, Scripture was needed amid the startling lights of immediate Divine inspiration, how much more profitable and essential must that Scripture be now, when the pillar of fire by night is quenched, and the pillar of cloud by day has departed, and the glory between the cherubim is no longer found in a material habitation.

As soon as Scripture was finished, and the whole of this remarkable volume completed, then all supernatural light, as far as it was miraculous, was withdrawn. There was no Pentecost subsequent to the completion of the Word of God. God is never lavish to profusion in miraculous power; where ordinary means are enough, extraordinary acts will never be employed. As soon, therefore, as the Volume was completed, and accessible to all more or less always, and singularly so now, God withdrew that supernatural inspiration, as far at least as it was miraculous; and left men to the use and exercise of reason on the page that he had inspired; with the promise of his Holy Spirit not to give new Scriptures, which was the fact previous to the completion of the whole, but to give us new hearts and new light wherewith to read and understand the old Scriptures already perfected. The Spirit before the completion of this book gave successive fragments of Scripture; the Spirit, since the completion of this volume, gives no new revelations, but new grace, new light, new hearts, wherewith to read, understand, and savingly profit by, the old and perfect Scriptures that God has given us. I know not a more remarkable proof of the sufficiency of this Volume to make one wise unto everlasting life than the parable, or rather, the literal history, of the rich man and Lazarus. When the rich man lifted up his eyes, in the expressive language of Scripture, in hell, being in torment, he saw the yawning and impassable chasm between him and the blessed and happy in glory; and recollected—showing that the lost have not lost their memory—that he had left behind him five brothers in his father's

house, living without religion, not believing the reality of those truths that he then and there so disastrously and hopelessly felt ; and he begged of Abraham that he would send to those five brothers, and testify unto them, lest they should come into this place of torment. Now if ever there was an exigency that demanded a special message, and if ever there was a petition that from its beneficence seemed a reasonable one, it was here ; and one would have supposed that the reply would have been, "If such a message will have this effect, it shall immediately be sent." But what was Abraham's reply, acting simply as a minister of God ? "They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them." See how full and suggestive of instruction are these words. "You want me to send an extraordinary messenger. I am satisfied that would fail. They have already inspired Scripture ; Scripture they themselves admit to be inspired ; for they are Jews. These Scriptures are in their hands, they are read every day in their synagogue. If, therefore, these five brothers want to know what is the issue of an ungodly life ; if they want to know what are the hopes and prospects of the holy ; if they want to know that true religion leads to heaven, and that irreligion leads away from it, it is really supererogatory to send a messenger from heaven to tell them ; for they have Moses, who tells it over and over again ; and they have the prophets, repeating it line upon line, chapter upon chapter, in almost endless succession." But he is not to be repelled even by this : "Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent ;" as if to say, "They will not believe the inspired record, which they know to be so ; but if some supernatural

being, radiant with all the glory of heaven, or if some dead one were to rise wrapped in his shroud, and to speak in more than mortal eloquence to these five reckless and ungodly men, they would be so impressed by the messenger that they would listen to and believe the message." This is not an uncommon opinion still, but it is a very absurd one; for you would find that,—if I address an ungodly, irreligious person, who believes the Bible to be true, but who for all practical purposes lives as if it were a fable; who, in other words, does not believe it; despises and ignores it,—were such a messenger to come down from heaven to-morrow, he would be awed and impressed and overwhelmed in the night watches by the solemn and startling apparition; and when that apparition told him in strains he never heard before, "Unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" as he awoke the first morning he would be awed and depressed; he would ponder the message, he would turn it over in his mind, and set himself earnestly to understand and to feel it. Next day, as the recollection of the apparition wore away, the depth of the impression of the message would wear away too. The third day he would think it must have been a dream; the fourth day, it must have been some slight distemper, or disarrangement in his stomach that made him see what was not real, and think it was an apparition when it was really a fancy; and ultimately he would plunge into all his wickedness and sins only the more desperately because he had conquered the momentary remonstrance that this messenger from heaven then and there addressed to him. You can see, therefore, that unless there were apparitions of this kind to

every man every now and then, there would be no conviction ; and such apparitions of heavenly messengers coming regularly would be regarded as part and parcel of the usual phenomena of nature ; part and parcel of the laws of physical economy in which we live ; and man would just be as hardened, and as prayerless, and as insensible to eternal things as we find him now. And therefore, there was infinite philosophy and wisdom in the remark of Abraham ; “ If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” Have we not in these words a striking proof of the sufficiency of Scripture ? But if some one object, and say, “ But this was Moses and the prophets ; ” I answer, That only strengthens my position ; because, if Moses and the prophets were sufficient to draw men from ruin and lead them to heaven, then still more must Moses and the prophets, and the Evangelists and the Apostles, be sufficient to lead men to heaven and deter from misery. We therefore infer the excellence, the perfection, the sufficiency of the Scriptures ; so much so, that if all Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is not able to make you perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work, there is nothing more for you. It is the only instrument ; it is the instrument that the Spirit works by ; and if you are not enlightened and converted through the truth, and by the Spirit’s application of the truth, you will never be enlightened or converted at all ; for no one will rise from the dead to come again to convince you. One has risen from the dead, by irresistible and irrefragable evidences of the truth ; and “ God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers

by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son."

I learn another lesson from this interesting passage ; that if it was dutiful in the days of Joshua to read the Scriptures, it is surely dutiful now. There was then a special presence of God ; a special guidance ; there was the miracle just performed of the crumbling walls of Jericho ; there was the other remarkable occurrence at the siege of Ai, all evidences of a present God : and yet God's revealing of himself in these miracles only more and more, not less, led Joshua and those that were with him to the study of God's holy Word. But what is so remarkable in this instance is that the reader of the Bible to his army was a general, the commander-in-chief of that army. I daresay if it had been conveyed by the mysterious whispering wire that the general of our army in the Crimea was seen seated on a rock, or standing in the midst of a hollow square, reading a chapter to his troops, there would have been much merriment on the part of the critics of the day, and scoffing in some of the newspapers. And yet Joshua, a general, a commander-in-chief, did so ; and Joshua did not prove a coward because he did so : nor did he wield his sword with less success, or carry out his plans and purposes with less effect, because he sheathed the sword for an hour, and wielded, what soldiers still may wield, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. What a precedent, then, have we here, not of a Levite, nor of a priest, nor of an ecclesiastical personage of any sort, but of a soldier, reading to his army God's holy Word. And if you will read the records of military life you will find that the bravest men, and the men most to be

depended upon, and trusted, were the most religious. Nelson was obliged to own it was the Methodists among his crew that were the men he could fall back upon in the hour of peril or in the forlorn hope. And it has been admitted by Collingwood and others, admirals and generals too, that it was the Christian men in their regiments and crews on whom they could most implicitly rely. And if you will read the memoirs of the recent war, who have been many of them the bravest men? The Shadforths, Vicars and others, who were not ashamed to read God's Word in the tent, to kneel and seek God's blessing on the field; and to own that whilst they feared God, they did not fear the forces of the Autocrat of all the Russias. We have in this very passage a striking proof how it is possible to combine piety with military skill, heroism, and success; and to prove that the one is perfectly compatible with the other.

But it is interesting to notice to whom Joshua the soldier read the Bible. We have seen that he read it in the hearing of the soldiers, and the women and the children. He not only cared for the well being of his army, but for what would be called in modern military phrase, the camp followers. And this general had such a desire that the souls of all under his influence and within the range of his voice should be happy, that he took pains to read the Bible in the hearing not only of the army, but it is said expressly, of the women and the children.

How fatally mistaken must Joshua have been, or how deeply mistaken must the Romish Church be, when she declares in a solemn Bull, a document called the Bull Unigenitus, that it is heresy, monstrous heresy,

for women to have and to read the Scriptures, or for any to read the Scriptures to them. They single out women reading the Bible for condemnation in one Proposition. It is heresy, and savouring of heresy, and to be reprobated and put down by force, that women should have or read the Scriptures. But what a strange rule must this be! The Pope must have forgotten that many a woman understands the Bible better at this day than he himself does; and whether it was the jealousy of Clement XI., or the intense ignorance of the Church of which he was the head, the condemning rescript still remains, and women are not to have the Bible, nor to read it, nor to hope in reading to understand it. But yet it is quite evident, that when the Bible was composed of books confessedly not so plain as the New Testament, when the Books of Moses were the only parts that were finished and completed, these parts of the Scriptures Joshua believed so useful to women, so instructive to children, that he, the general of the army, required all women, children, and strangers, to be present, in order that all might hear, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, those precious Scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation. And when Joshua read to all these, he implied in doing so his belief that women and children had souls to be saved just as others; and that they needed the knowledge of that truth which is salvation unto all that receive it. And secondly, he recognised the fact that there were relative obligations of women to their children, and to their husbands; of children to their parents and to each other; and the whole to himself as the military ruler of the camp, which they needed to be instructed

in and made acquainted with. It is here that we find our duties ; it is in this Volume that our relationships are inspired, sanctified, and ennobled. And the extinction of this blessed book, or its removal from its influence over all the relationships of social life, would be the most awful catastrophe, would precede the most terrible convulsion that ever happened in our social history. And when one knows this book, one wonders that any church or any man upon earth should seek to keep it away from the people. Often have I stated that the Epistles in the New Testament, letters written by Paul, and Peter, and James, are not mainly addressed to the clergy, they are addressed to the laity ; that is, as we should say, they are addressed to the people. And when the Church claims to have the Bible to give to the people, we have no objection to admit her arguments ; because she has no more right to keep the Bible, these Epistles, from the laity to whom they are addressed, than the Post Office has to keep a letter addressed to me out of my hands. The New Testament is yours ; it is written to you ; it is written for you ; and the clergy, priest, prelate, bishop, cardinal, pope, are only more or less faithful letter carriers, Bible distributors, to those whose signature and superscription these Epistles unquestionably bear. And when one thinks of the preciousness and of the intelligible nature of this book, one wonders why they should keep it. The figures employed in this book are all drawn from secular things ; the beautiful illustrations are not taken from the mysteries of astronomy, from the abstruse disclosures of geology ; they are figures drawn from the growing grass, from the blossoming flowers, from the lofty trees, from the

hills, from the lights of morning and the twilight of dewy eve ; from farms, from merchandise, from fishing boats, and nets and fishermen, from the deep ; from all that is common, and comes in contact with every man in every place, and at every time, the figures and illustrations of this book are taken. And if ever there was a book so constructed as to be universally intelligible, and therefore to be universally popular, it is just this blessed book, the Bible. When we criticise, or explain, or illustrate it to you, we do not substitute something for the Bible ; we simply withdraw what seemed to be obstructions to your reaching it. The translation of the Bible into English is not altering it, but simply the removal of an obstruction to your getting at it. The explanation of the scholar is not adding to the Bible, but merely removing some difficulty that stands between you and it ; a difficulty not real, but that in your case appears to you, either from your ignorance or your inexperience, to stand between you and the knowledge of this blessed book.

And we shall find, too, that men are not less dutiful, that women are not less well educated as daughters, or wives, that soldiers are not less brave, that the strangers conversant amongst us are more, not less, well behaved, because they are made acquainted with that blessed book which teaches man in all places, in all circumstances, how to live divinely, and enables him at length to die as one who knows in whom he has believed, and that he is able to keep what he has committed to him against that day.

And lastly, I add, whilst man explains, the Holy Spirit must apply. It is not true that the Spirit's

work ceased with the completion of the Bible: one department of his work ceased when he gave the Bible: but another department of that work continues to the end, when he enables the reader to understand the Bible, and applies the truths of the Bible to his heart, and so makes him wise unto salvation.

May that Spirit thus teach us, for Christ's sake.
Amen.

THE CRAFTY CARDINALS.

CHAPTER IX.

COMBINATIONS—A REPUBLIC—A TRICK—OLD BOTTLES, MEANING
OF—PUNISHMENT.

IN the opening of the instructive chapter we have read we have an account of “all the kings upon this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts,” mentioning their names and the nationalities over which they reigned, gathering themselves together with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel. Here you notice how the bad conspire when their own objects are to be attained ; and conspire together as if they were one man. Is not that a lesson for the good to combine in causes that are truly Christian, beneficent, and right ? Why should the wicked alone have unity in action ; and God’s people be divided, split, and rent among themselves ? And we read that “when the inhabitants of Gibeon,” a country not mentioned in the list that is here given in the first verse, “heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they did work wilily.”

“4. *They did work wilily.* Heb. ‘they also did work wilily,’ *i. e.* cunningly, shrewdly, craftily. The term ‘also,’ which is omitted in our translation, but occurs in the original, carries in it a reference to the course

adopted by the Canaanitish kings. They adopted the measures which seemed to them the wisest and most politic, under the circumstances. In like manner the Gibeonites *also* determined to exercise *their* ingenuity in the present emergency, but they had recourse to a subtle stratagem, entirely different from the more open, straightforward, but ruinous course pursued by their neighbours. As to the moral character of this device of the Gibeonites, we can only say of it, as our Saviour said of the unjust steward, 'they acted wisely in their generation;' they did what the common maxims of mere worldly prudence dictated under the circumstances, and yet their fraud and prevarication cannot be justified, nor have we any reason to think they fared so well by employing it, as they would have done without it. A more simple and upright course would undoubtedly have secured to them far greater advantages."—*Bush*.

These inhabitants of Gibeon seem to have been a republic existing in the land of Canaan, before it was possessed by the Israelites, in the midst of the various monarchies that are here mentioned; because you will notice that while the kings of the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, and others, are all mentioned, these inhabitants of Gibeon had only elders or seniors ruling over them; evidently without a king; and forming some experimental republic in the midst of the autocracies of Canaan, at the time that Joshua crossed the Jordan, and was bent on executing the commission of God; namely, to punish by death the inhabitants for their crimes against heaven. It appears that the people of Gibeon heard that Joshua was approaching them; that their city would soon be

subjected to his irresistible siege ; and they therefore resolved, with immense craft and cunning, to propitiate him, or to get an oath from him that they would be spared in the midst of the universal extermination.

And accordingly, “they did work wilily”—that is, craftily—“and went and made as if they had been ambassadors;” they set out as a deputation. The word “ambassador” is here the translation of a Hebrew word, which, singularly enough, means literally a hinge on which a door moves, or a gate is moved. It is also very singular that the same word should pass into modern usage in a very remarkable way ; namely, into the word cardinal. A cardinal was originally the chief minister of the Roman emperor ; but after the Roman empire was subverted by the Papal despotism, then the cardinal became one of a college of officers, or chief ministers, or bishops, who were the counsellors of the Pope, out of whom the Pope is elected ever as a vacancy occurs. They were called cardinals, from the Latin word *cardo*, a hinge ; meaning, as applied to a civil state, the hinge, the officer, around whom the state revolves ; and as applied to a Roman Cardinal, the great personages around whom the Church revolves. Now you might translate the word here with great propriety, anticipating only subsequent events, “And they did work with great craft, and went as cardinals ;” men very much characterised by great craft, and very capable of working very wilily. They went as if they had been cardinals, told prodigious lies, pretended to be what they were not, assumed prerogatives that were not given them ; and the consequence was that they

imposed upon Joshua and all the men of Israel; and they secured an oath that sheltered them from death, though not from all the bondage of hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Well, these cardinals or ambassadors went with "sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up." You naturally ask how a bottle could be bound up and rent. The answer is, the bottles of the ancients, in which they kept their wine, were the skins of goats; the feet were cut off, and the skin sewed up where these had been cut off; and the leg was the aperture by which the wine was introduced, and out of which the wine was poured. These goat skins were their bottles.

"——*Took old sacks.* 'Of course they profess to do what they actually would have done had they really come from a distant place. Hence we learn that at this time little accommodation except that of lodging, if that, was expected upon a journey, and that every one carried provisions and drink with him as at present. This rendered necessary their sacks, doubtless for containing their provisions and baggage. All travellers now carry sacks with them for such purposes. If they can afford it, these sacks are large, containing a strange assortment of articles—of dress, bedding, food, and even of pots and pans for cooking the necessary meals. These are usually carried on animals hired for the purpose, or on the animal which the servant, if any, rides. A poorer traveller reduces his baggage to narrower limits, so that he wants but small bags, which being thrown over the back of his ass or mule, he rides upon himself. Those who have but one ass to carry themselves and baggage, fre-

quently dismount and walk a considerable part of the way to relieve their beasts. This may account for the manner in which the clothes *and shoes* of the Gibeonites were supposed to have been worn out by long travel, although they had asses on which to ride. The bags which travellers use are commonly of stout woollen cloth or carpeting, sometimes strengthened with leather to keep out the wet. Bags of hair cloth are also sometimes used for this purpose, and almost always for carrying the corn and chopped straw for the cattle."—*Pict. Bib.*

You can easily understand the allusion in the Gospel of St. Matthew, where it speaks of putting new wine into old bottles. The wine, as everybody knows, vegetable juice, when left to itself ferments; carbonic acid gas is generated, the saccharine matter is destroyed, and the alcoholic element comes into play. The consequence of this fermentation would be the expansion of the skin to its utmost possible stretch; the skin being elastic at first: then when it becomes hard, dry, expanded to the utmost; to put new must, that is, vegetable juice, the juice of the grape, into the skin after being extended to its maximum, would be to expose the dry, hard skin to a pressure it would be unable to resist; the consequence would be the skin would burst, and the wine would be lost. Now these skins contained the wine; and these inhabitants, these people of Gibeon, brought their wine in these skins, probably empty skins, all patched and torn by hard wear; intending to make Joshua believe that they were old wine bottles, that they had been using during a journey of six months or twelve months in moving from a distant part of the land. And their

shoes they patched, or clouted, as the phrase is, to show they had been worn out by walking, and they were obliged to stop and patch them, however clumsily.

“5. *Old shoes and clouted*. This latter epithet, in the time of Shakspeare, when applied to shoes, meant such as had nails driven into the soles to strengthen them. (Cymb., Act IV., Sc. 2.) In this sense it may be derived from the French word *clou*, a nail. But this does not seem to correspond well with the original, which is a derivative from a root signifying *to spot, to patch, to spot with patches*. For this reason it is supposed by Adam Clarke, with much plausibility, to come from the old Saxon *clut*, a clout, a rag, or small piece of cloth, used for piecing or patching. This makes our present version to express very precisely the spirit of the original. As their shoes or sandals were made of skins in those early ages, it means that those they now wore were in a miserable tattered condition, having been often *patched, pieced, or mended*.”—*Bush*.

But you say, Why pretend to come from a distance? The answer is obvious. If they had said they came from the very neighbourhood, Joshua would have replied, “Oh, we see; you have heard what has happened to Jericho and Ai, and you know from your own deserts what will happen to you; and therefore, you have come to anticipate, if possible, your doom.” But when they said they came from a great distance; when they cunningly disguised the fact that they had heard of the destruction of Jericho and Ai, to which if they had alluded it would have been evidence they were living close by; when they pretended that only a rumour of what was done in Egypt had reached them;

and because they had heard of God's great doings in Egypt, they came and sued for peace, they imposed on Joshua. All was false; all, of course, was evasion. Joshua therefore said unto them, "Who are ye? and from whence come ye? And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the Lord thy God: and our elders," that is, their rulers, their governors, "said, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us." It was to make Joshua believe that they came spontaneously, recognised his mission, bowed to his authority; and without knowing that they were sentenced to death, as all the cities of Canaan were, they pretended that they did not know that, but came out of their spontaneous admiration of a great man, from deep conviction of the excellence of his polity, to make their submission to him, and get the best terms of peace they could possibly secure.

Well, we read that "the men"—that is, Joshua's followers—"took of their victuals," or bread, "and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. And the princes," or chiefs, "of the congregation, sware unto them, saying, We will spare you;" which they had no commission to do. All Canaan was guilty, was a land of criminals, doomed by God; and Joshua was simply the executioner of the great Judge's righteous sentence; and therefore, these princes had no right to enter into a compact with these inhabitants, or to spare them upon any terms or conditions whatever. However they did so; and when they discovered at last what they were, they were obliged to respect

the solemn oath they had sworn, and to spare their lives; but they said, "We will make you," what would be a degradation and a punishment, "hewers of wood and drawers of water;" two expressions used to denote the most menial purposes to which men could possibly be subjected. "And so did Joshua unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord."

"23. *Now therefore ye are cursed.* Ye shall be subjected to a severe calamity. Ye shall pay a bitter penalty for your deception. Ye shall subject yourselves and your children to the curse of a degrading bondage, and thereby shall the ancient denunciation against your ancestor be fulfilled;—'Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be.'

"If David could say, 'I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness,' surely these poor benighted heathen may well have esteemed their lot a blessing, hard and toilsome and humble as it was. They are supposed to have been afterwards called *Nethinim*, i. e. persons *given, dedicated, consecrated* to the service of the sanctuary and the assistance of the Levites. See v. 27; 1 Chron. ix. 2.—*There shall none of you be free from being bondmen.* Heb. לא ירד ככם עבד, *lō yikkārēth mik-kem öbēd*, *there shall not be cut off from you a servant*; i. e. the line of servitude shall be kept up; a sentence by which the bondage imposed upon them should be entailed upon their posterity."—*Bush.*

DESTRUCTION OF THE CANAANITES.

CHAPTER X.

DUTY—CRIMES OF THE CANAANITES—OBJECTIONS—HAILSTONES.

THIS seems at first sight a tale entirely disastrous and sorrowful as we read of city after city, tribe after tribe, with unsparing severity put to the sword. But the explanation is simple. If Joshua had done so to gratify personal revenge, or to aggrandise himself, or to add to the length and breadth and resources of the empire of Israel, out of ambition, vainglory, and national pride, he would have been guilty of cruelty and crime of the most aggravated description, indefensible in all respects. But we find that he did as the Lord God of Israel commanded; and, therefore, however painful to his feelings, he fulfilled in this matter his sacred and inevitable duty. God's Word was his law, the lamp to his feet and the light to his path, and obedience always and everywhere his duty. Why, it may be asked, should God command Joshua to exterminate all these people? The answer is, first, their crimes, as recorded in this chapter, had risen up to heaven; they were depraved, polluted, debased, by nearly every abomination under the sun. That would not have justified Joshua in putting them to the sword; but God had resolved that they should be punished, and punished signally, to vindicate his laws; and Joshua's was the

painful but inevitable office of the executioner of the just and righteous command of a just, a holy, and we add, a merciful God. We are sure that if there be clearly a command from heaven to execute a work upon the earth, however painful that work may be to flesh and blood, it is duty, because whatever is plainly indicated in the word is thereby vindicated by its being the mind and command of God. Joshua, a soldier, was raised up to succeed Moses, a legislator; the one governed by the sceptre; the other governed by the sword; and the sword of the one was no less consecrated to its mission than was the sceptre of the other. But if it should be said that it was very severe, and scarcely consistent with the goodness of God, to exterminate all the nations that were in Canaan, as is stated to have been the case in every city and in every tribe that was visited by the victorious troops of Joshua, we reply, if this be proof that God did not inspire this chapter and command this deed, is it not equally a disproof that God exists, when we find young and the old, male and female, the infant at the breast, and the grey-haired man, more or less involved in the calamities of war, in the results of a siege, in those endless incidents, and as the world would call them, accidents, which overtake and involve all classes without distinction in war, pestilence, commercial distress as in one common catastrophe? If the extermination of all those tribes, confessedly guilty, recorded in the history of Joshua, be a proof that God did not inspire the Bible, then the fact that similar scenes occur under his eye within the world that he governs, over which he presides, permitted by him when they might be prevented, must be equally a proof that there is no God, or that that God has forgotten, or

is unable, or is unwilling to interpose. We shall always find that every argument against the God that inspired the Bible drawn from facts in the Bible never stops there, but must sweep much further, and end in the disproof of the existence of a God altogether. There are equal difficulties in natural religion. But we are satisfied at once that all that God did towards the Canaanites was justified first, by their own great crimes; secondly, by the fact that he was the Law-giver and the Judge of all the earth; and thirdly, that Joshua did not do these things to gratify a personal pique, but to fulfil his duty as a soldier and a servant of God.

The immediate cause of this great slaughter of the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, was very much owing to the Gibeonites, who, as we read last, with great craft and cunning, made Joshua believe that they came from a great distance suppliants for mercy, while in reality they lived close by, and thus they succeeded in obtaining an oath from him that he would spare their lives. Having thus taken them under the wing of his patronage, he was pledged as an honourable man to give them all the protection and shelter that he could. Well, the kings whose names are here given, heard of this trick, this successful trick, of the Gibeonites, and resolved to revenge themselves upon them for being traitors to the common cause, as they thought, and surrendering their country for the sake of a momentary safety.

"That we may smite Gibeon. That is, the Gibeonites. It is very conceivable that Adoni-zedek and his associates may have been glad of a plausible pretext for attacking the Gibeonites, as *their* more liberal form

of government was a standing rebuke of the despotism that prevailed among themselves. But their *avowed* motive undoubtedly was to punish the citizens of Gibeon for making peace with Joshua, as if they had thereby acted the part of traitors to the country and greatly strengthened the common enemy. In this incident we see what usually takes place when any of the enemies of Christ submit themselves to him. Their former friends and companions consider them as deserters from their standard, and are often bitterly exasperated against them. 'He that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.' Or if their opposition does not amount to actual enmity, it will at least show itself in a way of contempt and ridicule. Satan, too, is indignant at losing one of his vassals; and not only stimulates his subjects to commence hostilities against them, but labours by all possible wiles and devices to bring them back again to their former bondage. There is the same enmity existing against the cause of Christ now as ever. Earth and hell will still combine against his Church and every one that enters into covenant with him will, like the Gibeonites, have a powerful confederacy to contend with"—*Bush*.

They therefore resolved to attack the Gibeonites; and Joshua, having them as his contingent, and as hewers of wood, or makers of roads, in the camp, as persons merely to do the drudgery of it, felt it his duty to protect them to the very utmost; and therefore he marched to their relief with all his army, and encountered the forces of the enemy, and discomfited, and repelled, and beat them back.

"11. And it came to pass as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that

the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died; they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword. Josephus calls it 'a violent tempest of *hailstones* of prodigious size;' and the author of Ecclesiasticus, xlv. 6, thus speaks of the event: 'With *hailstones* of mighty power he made the battle to fall violently upon the nations, and in the descent of Beth-horon he destroyed them that resisted.' That God has, on other occasions, made use of hailstones to destroy both men and cattle, is clear from the instance of the plague of hail in Egypt, Ex. ix. 18, and in the predictions of Ezekiel against Gog, xxxiii. 22, the Most High is introduced as threatening that 'he would plead against him with pestilence, and with blood, with an overflowing rain, and *great hailstones*, fire and brimstone.' God himself, moreover, speaks to Job, xxxviii. 22, 23, of treasures or magazines of snow and hail which he has reserved for the day of battle and war. But although we have no doubt that a shower of hailstones is here intended, yet we are equally convinced that this shower, though *natural* in itself, was *supernaturally* employed on this occasion. They probably far exceeded the usual size, and it certainly indicates a miraculous interposition of Providence that they should have fallen at the very crisis when God promised to assist his people against their enemies, and that while in falling they slew multitudes of the fugitive Canaanites, they should not have harmed one of their pursuers! The following account of a similar phenomenon happening in our own times is graphically described by one of our own countrymen, who was

something more than an eye-witness of its effects. The letter is dated Constantinople, Aug., 1831. We had got perhaps a mile and a half on our way, when a cloud rising in the west, gave indications of an approaching rain. In a few minutes we discovered something falling from the heavens with a heavy splash, and of a whitish appearance. I could not conceive what it was, but observing some gulls near, I supposed it to be them darting for fish; but soon after discovered that they were large balls of ice falling. Immediately we heard a sound like rumbling thunder, or ten thousand carriages rolling furiously over the pavement. The whole Bosphorus was in a foam as though heaven's artillery had been discharged upon us and our frail machine. Our fate seemed inevitable; our umbrellas were raised to protect us; the lumps of ice stripped them into ribands. We fortunately had a bullock's hide in the boat, under which we crawled and saved ourselves from further injury. One man of the three oarsmen had his hand literally smashed; another much injured in the shoulder; Mr. H. received a severe blow in the leg; my right hand was somewhat disabled, and all more or less injured. A smaller kaick accompanied with my two servants. They were both disabled, and are now in bed with their wounds; the kaick was terribly bruised. It was the most awful and terrific scene that I ever witnessed, and God forbid that I should be ever exposed to such another. Balls of ice as large as my two fists fell into the boat, and some of them came with such violence as certainly to have broken an arm or leg had they struck us in those parts. One of them struck the blade of an oar and

split it. The scene lasted, perhaps, five minutes; but it was five minutes of the most awful feeling that I ever experienced. When it passed over we found the surrounding hills covered with masses of ice, I cannot call it hail; the trees stripped of their leaves and limbs, and everything looking desolate. We proceeded on our course, however, and arrived at our destination, drenched and awe-struck. I have been in action, and seen death and destruction around me in every shape of horror; but I never before had the feeling of awe which seized upon me on this occasion, and still haunts, and I feel will ever haunt me. I returned to the beautiful village of Buyucdere. The sun was out in all its splendour, at a distance all looked smiling and charming, but a nearer approach discovered roofs covered with workmen repairing the broken tiles, desolated vineyards, and shattered windows. Of a flock of geese in front of our house, six were killed, and the rest dreadfully mangled. Two boatmen were killed in the upper part of the village, and I have heard of broken bones in abundance. Many of the thick brick tiles with which my roof is covered are smashed to atoms, and my house was inundated by the rain that succeeded this visitation. It is impossible to convey an idea of what it was. Imagine to yourself, however, the heavens suddenly frozen over, and as suddenly broken to pieces in irregular masses, of from half a pound to a pound weight, and precipitated to the earth. My own servants weighed several pieces of three-quarters of a pound; and many were found by others of upwards of a pound."—*Com. Porter's Letters from Constantinople and its Environs*, Vol. i. p. 44.

THE SUN STANDING STILL.

CHAPTER X.

IN order to make an end of the Canaanites, utterly to exterminate them, as God's command was, we read that the day was not long enough; and at even, just as the sun was beginning to set in the west, and the moon beginning to appear dimly in the distant and the opposite point of the horizon, Joshua, by a divine instinct, not by a mere human wish, said, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies:" that is, justly punished them. Now this phenomenon has been made a great subject of derision with men of a sceptical mind; but yet it is very absurd in them to make that the ground of scorn as if impossible which is declared expressly to be the deed of an omnipotent God. The first objection they adduce is this: everybody knows now-a-days, even a child in a school, that the sun does not go round the earth, as the Popes believed infallibly in the days of Galileo, and the Irish Roman Catholic primate does still, which would be a very outrageous thing, but that the earth goes round the sun; that the sun is the centre of the system; and they say, we cannot suppose that God used or sanctioned, much less inspired, such words;

"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon ; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon : " or that he authorized the statement that "The sun stood still : " whereas we know it is the rotation of the earth upon its axis that makes the eye think that the sun is travelling across our canopy ; when really we only are moving from the west on the earth's axis round to the east. But suppose now Joshua had said, "Earth, rest thou in thy revolution, and remain," no Israelite would have understood it, and the popular mind of modern Europe would regard it as affectation. It never was the object of the Bible to teach astronomy ; it was the design, and it is the tendency of the Bible, in plain and intelligible language to teach the great truths of God, of the soul, and of eternity. And we shall find that the language used here is still so plain, so popular, that if we open our Almanacks for 1856, we shall find it constantly said, The sun sets and the sun rises. Physiologically that is nonsense ; but popularly it is the best way of conveying very useful intelligence. And even Sir Isaac Newton, if he were now living, or Sir David Brewster at the present day, would neither of them think of saying the earth makes its revolution on its axis, or moves so many degrees round upon its axis, but the sun rises and sets, just like everybody else ; and they do what is right. And therefore the word of God, instead of speaking unphilosophical language, speaks plain common sense ; using popular words as the best vehicles of eternal and precious truth.

But you object. How could this have happened as a fact without producing a tremendous catastrophe ? We all know that if we were moving at the rate of fifty miles

an hour in a railway carriage, and if that railway carriage were instantly arrested, the impetus or forward force would be so great that it would throw us to a very great distance from it. And everybody knows that if the earth, such is its tremendous speed, were, in rolling round on its axis, its imaginary axis, to be instantly arrested, every house, and castle, and rock, and tree, and human being, would be pitched into the air some miles into space, till probably some went within the range of the attraction of the moon itself, and landed there or in another planet ; such would be the tremendous projectile force. Objectors assert, this arrest never could have taken place, or such a catastrophe would have occurred. The answer is obvious. We have omnipotence, as here declared, to draw upon ; and the same omnipotence, surely, that could arrest the earth on its axis, was able and adequate to arrest the ordinary consequence of it. People forget that this is not recorded as an accident ; but as an express act of God himself ; and that he that wrought the miracle, kept in his own hand, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further." And therefore, taking this as a divine and inspired record, we receive the whole statement as fact ; and are quite satisfied to believe that there was no day like that before it or after it ; in other words, there were two days ; and instead of being a day and a night, there was a day twenty-four hours long.

Some people believe the Sabbath must be on the seventh day. But here it is quite plain that this very thing occurring must have altered the day on which the Sabbath is kept. Hence if it be a moral and permanent obligation to keep the Sabbath only on the seventh day, as the Jews and some others conclude,

then it could never have been altered ; because what is moral is immutable ; what is ceremonial only is changeable. We therefore see from physical reasons that the day is changeable, and was changed from the seventh day to the first ; but the Sabbath itself, whether on the seventh day or on the first, equally endures the Sabbath of the Lord our God.

One more fact I must notice : and it is this. We read in the 13th verse, "Is not this written in the book of Jasher ?" There has been a great deal of discussion and no little conjecture upon this subject. But in the first place, does the non-existence of Jasher prove, as some say, that a book of the Bible has been lost ? If you reason with a Roman Catholic, and urge the Bible is the rule of faith, he will tell you, you have not the whole Bible ; and among other books he names as wanting will be the book of Jasher. I have frequently personally met with this argument. Well, the first answer that you should give is, "Does not your Church profess to be and always to have been the guardian of the Bible ? Do you not profess to have kept the Bible for us, and that we are indebted to you for it ? But what a sleepy infallible guardian must your Church have been to allow one whole book to drop from the Bible, and to have made no search in order to discover it !" So that in making this objection she positively censures herself. But we assert that no book has been lost. Because a book is referred to in the Bible, it is not therefore proved or pronounced inspired. The apostle Paul quotes two Greek poets in the New Testament ; but because he quotes one line from a Greek poet, that is not a declaration that the Greek poet was inspired, or that

his writing was part of Scripture. And so here, because the historian quotes the book of Jasher, it does not prove that the book of Jasher was inspired. But it may turn out as a very singular fact that it is not the book of Jasher. The Hebrew word Yasher is derived from another Hebrew word that means, "The righteous;" and the translation may be, and has been even proposed in the margin, "Is it not written in the book of the upright or the righteous?" and, instead of being a book composed by a man Jasher—it may be one of the records contained in this very book, where there is, I believe, allusion to it; an allusion, however, that I have not found. But whether it was another book or not, there is no evidence that it was a part of the sacred canon, a book of the Bible; or that one book of the Bible has been lost.

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN.

CHAPTER XI.

APPARENT CRUELTY. DESTRUCTION OF THE CITIES. WAR.

IN the last chapter we found that so truly and vigorously was Joshua engaged in the fulfilment of his obligation as the commander-in-chief of all the hosts of Israel, that in order that he might accomplish his mission, in popular, though not strictly scientific language, the sun stood still on Gibeon, and lengthened the day to twenty-four hours; and the moon failed to rise over the valley of Ajalon; that he might thus finish the work, the dread but dutiful work, that God had entrusted to his hands. It does seem to us at first sight extremely perplexing that the whole of this history which we have read in successive chapters should be the history of the slaughter of one portion of the human family, and of the victorious and exterminating march of another portion; and both with the express sanction, cognisance, and approbation of God. But you will recollect, what we said before, and what it is so important to bear in mind in the whole of our reading of this history, that the Canaanites were intensely guilty before God; they were polluted, and debased, and degraded; and if God be the sovereign and the lawgiver of the whole earth, it is his prerogative to decide what shall be the

punishment meted out to the guilty, and in what shape that punishment shall be inflicted upon them. The guilty race were the inhabitants of Canaan; the commander who received authority from God to exterminate them was Joshua. If it should be said, Could not God have converted them? how easy it is to ask twenty questions in a minute which it would take hours to answer, and to answer after all most unsatisfactorily. What God can do is not our rule of faith, but what God has written and said in his own blessed Word. Omnipotence might do many things which infinite wisdom, wielding and regulating that omnipotence, has not chosen to do. All that we can say here is that these nations were guilty, that they were punished not beyond their deserts, but exactly according to them. If it should be argued that this seems cruel, we just answer, Do we not see that nations in protecting themselves, in punishing the aggressor, incur on their own side terrible sufferings, by famine, by plague, by pestilence, by war; and the nation that is victorious is often clad in crape and sackcloth because its followers have fallen upon the high places of the field? And do we not see visitations and retributions on the guilty nation of the most dread and terrible description? But, if God still reigns, as we know, if God be still omnipotent, as we know, you ask, Why does he not prevent these things? The answer is, we see he does not prevent them in his providence, and we see that he commanded some of them in his word; but whether he does not prevent or whether he does permit, we may depend upon it that the upshot will be honour to his name, the right place for the creature to lie down in,

which is the dust ; and we shall see that those things which perplexed and puzzled us were all done in wisdom, in mercy, and in beneficence also.

We may admit here, in the next place, that some of the express or specific precepts must appear to us extremely severe. For instance, the treatment of the horses seems unnecessary cruelty ; the sinews or the muscles of the hind legs of the horses were ordered to be cut. I have been trying to ascertain what this implies, and whether it be great cruelty. In the first place, we answer that if this be cruel as commanded here, it is what occurs still in war. Read the history of that brilliant and memorable charge of Balaklava, where so many horses bit the dust, and their riders with them ; how severe were the sufferings of those dumb, innocent and noble brutes ! God saw those sufferings ; he could have prevented them ; he did not ; he permitted them in his providence. And if you ask why such things are, the answer is, God never made man to suffer, or brute to be struck down ; sin did it all, and by sin came death ; and the responsibility is not with God, but with men. If you say again, That only throws us further back ; God might have prevented the entrance of sin ; I answer, So it might have been ; but he has not ; and all that we can gather is that the responsibility is not with him, but entirely, exclusively, from first to last, with us. But in trying to ascertain what is the nature of this treatment of horses, whether there was cruelty in it, I am informed there is none. I am told the stroke of the sword that severs the muscle necessarily cuts a very great artery, and that the animal very speedily bleeds to death ; and secondly, that the horse,

being rendered useless for the enemy, the enemy will for many reasons destroy him immediately; and what seems to be the infliction of needless agony was really the infliction of not a protracted but a speedy death.

Michaelis remarks, that "from ignorance of military affairs, most expositors have understood this command, as if it meant, not that the horses should be killed, but merely lamed in their hind legs, and then let go. But a horse so treated, must, instead of running off, fall instantly backwards, and writhe about miserably till he die, which generally happens from loss of blood, by the stroke of the sabre, cutting the artery of the thigh. This is still, as military people have since informed me, the plan adopted to make those horses that are taken, but cannot be easily brought away, unserviceable to the enemy again. They hamstring them, which can be done in an instant; and they generally die of the wound by bleeding to death; but though they should not, the wound never heals; so that even if the enemy recover them alive, he is forced to dispatch them; and every compassionate friend of horses who has ever seen one in that situation will do so in order to terminate his misery. There is no foundation for Kimchi's opinion, that mere laming was enjoined, because it would be wrong to put an animal unnecessarily to death. For thus to lame a horse that would still live, in my opinion, would rather have been extreme cruelty; because, being then useless, nobody would be likely to give him any food." (*Comment. on Laws of Moses, Art. lxiv.*)

We read here in the sequel of this chapter that Joshua destroyed all the cities, and all the inhabitants; took all their spoil; and spared none. The

reason was, that was his duty—it was his commission. If he had entered into a premature and inglorious peace with these inhabitants; if he had accepted terms proposed by the representatives of any of the cities of Palestine which would not have secured the ascendancy of the children of Israel, then what would have been the result? A premature peace is worse than a protracted war; because it only gives the enemy, unappeased and unenfeebled, opportunity to strengthen all his positions and multiply his resources, and to burst forth like an overwhelming torrent upon the first convenient occasion. Joshua therefore finished his work, fulfilled his mission; and took such steps as made the peace that followed not a truce, but a lasting peace to the whole land.

It is added, in language that we wish we could apply to the world in which we live, “The land rested from war.” War is spoken of by some as sinful; so it is; but the sin is with those that kindle it. War is deprecated by some as never a duty; but we see it here written that it was a duty in the case of Joshua; and in the exercise of common sense, and in the light of God’s Word, nations have still to determine when the sword must be drawn; and when a nation draws the sword, it either ought never to have drawn it, or it ought to accomplish the mission that seems to be inevitably and obviously before it. We know, too, that all this was the type of a blessed prospect; that this earth itself shall one day be spoken of as resting from war. War is an abnormal, an unnatural, a fevered condition; it is a dire and inevitable necessity at any time, a stern and terrible and plain duty; and the way to put an end to war, we

may depend upon it, in this dispensation, is not to make fine speeches against it, or to quote proofs of the guilt of it, or to enumerate the sufferings of it, sad and sorrowful as these are; but to do each man his best in his place to quench those passions in which the flame of war is kindled, and by which it is nursed, by spreading that blessed Gospel which erects in every heart and ultimately in every realm that kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost. But we know that the day will come when the Prince of peace shall supersede Joshua, the prince of war; when the spear that was Joshua's symbol shall be turned into the pruning hook, and the sword into the ploughshare, and the Prince of peace shall sway his sceptre over all the world. But as long as this dispensation lasts, so long wars will be; and when this dispensation shall be merged in a better, a grander, and a lasting one, then the earth, like the land, shall rest from war, and the nations shall learn its lessons no more.

RECAPITULATIONS.

CHAPTERS XII AND XIII.

REVELATION. ITS VARIOUS FEATURES. THE TRIBE OF LEVI'S
LOT. THE EAST.

THIS to us is a long, dull, and uninteresting catalogue. The two chapters are strictly one, both giving an account of the division of the land of Palestine into its tribes, its families, geographically and politically defined. The object of this was, first, to record in their own sacred law the frontiers of the tribes; so that no tribe might intrude upon another, or be disposed to spoil the division or the section that belonged to another. And hence, when disputes arose about the distribution of this land, such disputes were always settled by referring to these chapters, which to us are personally uninteresting, but as part and parcel of an inspired whole had an important use; and that use the prevention of disturbance, conflict, and dispute. Because all parts of Scripture are not equally interesting to us, it does not follow that they are not of vast importance either at some previous period in the history of God's church, or now as links in the evidence by which we prove this book to have God for its author, truth without any mixture of error for its matter, and eternal happiness for its blessed and its beneficial end. We must not read

the Bible with too selfish a desire to find personal profit for ourselves; we must read it also with the deep conviction that those holy men who wrote it were inspired of God to record things that to us seem unimportant; but which as links and ties in the mighty whole are of very great and lasting value. We find in this world spots that seem to us worthless, but yet they are not without their use, and that too very important; and so we find in God's Word sections that are to us personally dull; but nevertheless in another aspect and for other purposes, of great and valuable importance.

The only tribe excepted in this land from a geographical possession was the tribe of Levi. It was to minister to the Lord; it was the priestly tribe; and in order that they might have nothing in this world to win their affections to it, they were made dependent for their daily bread upon the service of the sanctuary, and the offerings made to the Lord their God.

And now one thinks again, why all this minute, so specifically minute, division of this land? Is all this of transient value? Is there no ultimate re-distribution of the land; is there no great purpose relating to it yet unfulfilled? May it not be that these distinctions have a permanent value? May it not be, if the tribes are to be restored to their own land again, as we believe they will, that the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of the Book of Joshua may again be read with fresh interest and appealed to for direction and division in the land of Palestine? And according to Zechariah we read, that when settled according to their tribes in the land that is theirs by

a perpetual covenant, God will pour out his Spirit upon them; and then they shall mourn and be in bitterness, as one for his only begotten and first-born son. And all things lead us to think that this great, and, we would add, glorious, event cannot be far distant. The complications of the earth, the wars of nations, the disputes of cabinets, the difficulties of statesmen—all seem tending towards the East; and to make the East assume an importance, and a place in our thoughts, our sympathies, and it ought to be in our prayers, which it has not had for two thousand years before.

“Chap. xii. 1.—*From the river Arnon unto Mount Hermon.* The small river Arnon was the boundary of all the southern coast of the land *occupied* by the Israelites beyond Jordan. The mountains of Hermon were the boundaries on the north. The Arnon takes its rise in the mountains of Gilead, and after running a considerable distance from north to south, turns to the north-west and falls into the Dead Sea not very far from the place where the Jordan discharges itself. See Num. xxi. 13; Deut. ii. 24.

“24. *All the kings, thirty and one.* From the number of these kings, we may learn how numerous and yet how small were the petty principalities into which the land of Canaan was divided. The extent of this country from north to south was not more than 150 miles, and not more than fifty from east to west. In like manner were nearly all the different nations of the world divided. The consequence was that civil wars and border feuds continually prevailed, making them an easy prey to foreign invaders. Thus history informs us that when Cæsar invaded Britain there

were no less than four kings in the single county of Kent.

“Chap. xiii. 15.—Moses gave unto the tribe of the children of Reuben inheritance according to their families.

“1. This was the most equitable method that could be adopted. Had the distribution been made by arbitrary appointment, as all could not receive portions equally good, some would probably have complained that their brethren were better dealt by than themselves. Dividing the land by lot, therefore, by cutting off all pretence for the charge of favoritism on the part of Moses, was the readiest way of satisfying all parties, and preventing discontent and discord.—2. The several allotments are here very minutely detailed, in order that litigation growing out of disputed boundaries might ever after be prevented. When the limits of each tribe were so clearly settled, there could be little room for contending claims, or if there were, an authentic register of the lot of each tribe would be at hand to be appealed to for a decision, and there is no doubt that it was often made use of in after ages for this purpose. We cannot but learn from this the great importance of devising every prudent method to prevent litigations about property:—3. The reading of this account by succeeding generations would tend to excite a very deep and lively impression of the goodness of God in bestowing upon their ancestors, for the benefit of their posterity, such a large and fertile country, an inheritance so replete with all the worldly blessings which heart could wish. ‘God’s grants look best, when we descend to the particulars.’”

—*Henry.*

DIVISION OF CANAAN.

CHAPTER XIV.

DIVISION BY LOT CORRESPONDS TO DIVISION OF JACOB AND MOSES.
CALEB, MEANING OF. DUTY AND EXPEDIENCY. SECRET OF
LONG LIFE.

YOU will recollect in the course of previous readings, both in the book of Genesis and in the book of Numbers, that Jacob in the one predicted the settlement of the tribes in Canaan; and in the other Moses laid out and delineated as on a chart the same settlement also. And here, in the two chapters that precede this, we have all the tribes settled in the conquered, the long promised, and now possessed land, according to the landmarks that had been laid down by these two inspired servants of God.

What strikes us at once as the clearest evidence of the inspiration of these two men, and the presence of God in all that took place, is the fact that if on this occasion Joshua had arranged the whole land of Palestine for each tribe precisely according to the chart which Moses laid down, or which Jacob predicted, it would have been said that he took these two men's opinions as his only guides; and accommodated the facts, and the features, and the bounds of the settlement to what they had previously predicted they would be. But you will observe, in order to show that God was directly in it, Joshua assigns it all by

lot, not according to previous delineation; they cast lots what part of the land should belong to this tribe; what part should belong to that tribe; and on the lots being settled, over which man's wisdom, and power, or cunning, or dishonesty, if such had been, could have no control, the very arrangement that was determined by lot turns out to be precisely that which Jacob predicted, and which Moses had previously laid down. Now this was to the Israelites not only a proof of the inspiration of these two men, if they needed such, but it was also satisfactory evidence that the same God who had been with their fathers in the land of Egypt, who had marched them through the Red Sea and along the tortuous desert, was still with them in the land of Palestine, turning predictions into performances, and the commands he had given to his servants of old into the actual experience of his yet unforsaken, still beloved children of Israel.

This having taken place, we read next of "Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite," who, you recollect, came back, and remained faithful among the faithful few, when he gave a report of the Promised Land; and whose characteristic, we have seen twice or thrice mentioned in the course of our previous readings, was that "he wholly followed the Lord." The Hebrew word Caleb means "all heart," a man who is full of heart, enthusiasm, and well-regulated zeal. He never asked what was most expedient, what was most popular, what would get him the greatest *éclat*; but his constant query was, Is this the mind of God? Is this my duty? And having made up his mind that duty was right, he clung to it through good report and through bad report; and when all faltered and

failed he stood firm, and remained in his own great firmness and allegiance to God. Now this is the true course still. Here we see Caleb turns up again, still strong, vigorous in old age, prospered, blessed, and praised, when all the others are forgotten. We may be sure that duty taken first and expediency next is the true course. Right is always expedient; what seems expedient is not always right. We have so little patience that when we do what is right we are so anxious to hear the thunder of applause at our heels that we cannot wait and bide our time. But we may depend upon it, if like Caleb we do what is true and right in the sight of God, all the rest will in the long run adjust itself; and heaven and earth acquit and absolve the Caleb who follows the path of duty without turning to the right hand or to the left. Then we read that this good and great man, not only had this characteristic still appended to his name and engraven in the record of his biography, but was spared to fourscore and five years. And he says, "As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." He had all the maturity of age, experience and wisdom; and he had combined with it all the physical strength of his earlier days. And what does this teach us? That obedience to the prescriptions of God's Word is the true way in this world to have length of days and strength of body, as well as the only way to reach the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Even the world will tell you that moderation, temperance, and other elements, are the sources and the springs of health and of long life.

And if it be true that real religion gives and inspires such principles, and sustains and nourishes them; then we may be sure that, take the average, it will be found that he who carries true religion most into practice is the man, *cæteris paribus*, who will also have length of days and strength of life upon earth; and a happier and a brighter and a better life hereafter. We find that those who were unfaithful to God were the first to fail; whereas he who was faithful to God was spared to old age, and retained in that old age all his vigour, and was strong and fit for war, to go out and to come in. This is another confirmation of what I have ventured to say to you before, of which some very much doubt, that man's age is meant to be far more protracted than we generally suppose; and I believe that if we attended more to those restraints on the head, those restraints on the heart, that moderation of temper, of conduct, of gratification, of indulgence, and all the other elements that are requisite to constitute health, and strength, and happy days, we should reach a much greater age than we now do. It is obvious that in the days of Moses and Joshua seventy and eighty was not the usual limit of life; but that, as has been established by a celebrated French writer, whom I have before quoted on this subject, at seventy man only begins to grow old; and before seventy he ought to be, as far as God's Word and its limitations are concerned, in the scarcely diminished force and vigour of health and strength. It is not always so; but then the question that we should ask is, Does it arise from our excesses, or is it the consequence of God's law? But at all events, whether we live long

or short is a question that is very immaterial, for a few years make very little difference; the only thing we should be anxious about is that if we are not spared to live as long as Caleb, we should at least be spared till we learn to live that life which can say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Caleb says, verse 8:—" *I wholly followed the Lord.* Heb. מִלְּתִי אַחֲרֵי יְהוָה, *millēthi ahari Yehovah, fulfilled after the Lord.* Arab, 'I perfected my obedience before the Lord my God.' The energy of the expression is well preserved in our version. The words give the idea of a traveller, who, intent upon following his guide, so treads in his steps, as to leave hardly any void space between. As he had obtained this testimony from God himself, it was not vain-glory for him to speak of it, especially as this was the main ground on which he had become entitled to the object of his petition. It is not pride, but simply a tribute of due acknowledgment, to declare what a gracious God has done for us and by us. It was peculiarly to the honour of Caleb that he maintained such an unbending fidelity to God when his brethren and associates in that service, except Joshua, proved so faithless and faint-hearted. 'It adds much to the praise of following God, if we adhere to him when others desert and decline from him.'"—*Henry.*

Caleb said, verse 12:—" *Give me this mountain, i. e. mountainous chain or region.*

"*Hebron.*—The city itself fell afterwards to the lot of the Levites, xxi. 13, and became a city of refuge, xx. 7. 'When Caleb had it, he contented himself with the country about it, and cheerfully gave the city to the priests, the Lord's ministers; thinking it could

not be better bestowed, no, not upon his own children, nor that it was the less his own for being thus devoted to God.'—*Henry*. Hebron, at a still later period, became a royal city, being made in the beginning of David's reign the metropolis of the kingdom of Judah.

"*For thou heardest . . . how the Anakims were there.* This, it would seem, was the place from which more than any other the spies took their unfavourable report; for here they met with the sons of Anak, the sight of whom so much intimidated them. 'We may suppose that Caleb, observing what stress they laid upon the difficulty of conquering Hebron, a city garrisoned by the giants, and how from thence they inferred that the conquest of the whole land was utterly impracticable, bravely desired to have that city which they called *invincible* assigned to himself for his own portion; 'I will undertake to deal with that, and if I cannot get it for my inheritance, I will do without.' 'Well,' said Moses, 'it shall be thine own then, win it and wear it.'—*Henry*. Such is the spirit of the true Christian hero. All indeed are not such, but some are: and he who is, is not only willing, but forward, in the strength of God, to encounter the most formidable enemies and the most apparently insuperable obstacles in working out the will of his heavenly Master. If there is any enterprise of peculiar difficulty to be undertaken, or any post of especial danger to be occupied, he is prompt to volunteer his services for the occasion. Not that he courts the perilous work, merely for the purpose of a vain-glorious display of courage or skill, but because he wishes to honour God by his faith; to give him an opportu-

nity, through such an humble instrument, to glorify his great name and confound the infidelity of his enemies and his timorous friends. In one who feels the missionary impulse this Caleb-like spirit will prompt to a fearless survey of the whole field, and if there be any spot which is at once promising and yet appalling, desirable, and yet dreadful; a spot where the greatest force of heathen opposition is concentrated, that is the spot which will be really most attractive in his eye. Its difficulties and dangers will be among its highest recommendations. This spirit shone conspicuously in Paul in the whole course of his life and labours, and on one occasion we see it nobly expressing itself in so many words, when he says of Ephesus, 'A great and effectual door is opened unto me, and *many adversaries*.' The 'adversaries' were no doubt among the special inducements that prompted him to enter that field. It is cause of gratitude to God that there are such spirits still to be found in the world, and that as long as there shall be sons of Anak on earth to intimidate the fearful, there shall be also sons of Caleb to grapple with and destroy them.

"If so be the Lord will be with me, &c. Chal. 'Perhaps the Word of the Lord will be for my help.' The ardour of a bold native temperament is here moderated by the workings of a spirit of conscious unworthiness and of humble dependence on the Divine blessing. Caleb in these words virtually acknowledges that the battle is not to the strong nor the race to the swift, and that the favourable presence of God with us in our undertakings is all

in all to our success. The expression is not to be understood as implying any doubt in his mind of God's readiness to assist him, but simply as a disclaimer of exclusive reliance on his own unaided prowess."—*Bush*.

CATALOGUES AND LANDMARKS.

CHAPTER XXII.

CATALOGUES AND LANDMARKS. RETURN OF THE FORTY THOUSAND. JOSHUA'S ADDRESS. POPULAR MISTAKE. THE CHRISTIAN'S TEMPLE. ALTAR AND ASPECT IN PRAYER. ACCUSATIONS. EXPLANATIONS.

You will perceive that I have omitted several chapters between the fourteenth and twenty-second. The reason is, that these chapters are chiefly catalogues of the distribution of the tribes over the land of Canaan; most important as historical land-marks, but necessarily not instructive or edifying, like all mere catalogues of names, as reading in the midst of a family or public congregation. The inheritance of Caleb is in chap. xiv., the lot of Judah in xv., lot of Joseph in xvi. and xvii., the Tabernacle is set up in chap. xviii., the lot of Benjamin and the remaining tribes is in xix., and the Cities of Refuge are in xx., xxi. This chapter records the final settlement of these tribes, according to predictions that had been given before, in the land of Canaan; and the steps that they took after the accomplishment of this long wished for and desired enterprise.

“xv. 19.—*He gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.* Both higher and lower ground; tracts of hill and dale well watered. An allusion of practical bearing is sometimes made to this, when we pray for spiritual

and heavenly blessings, which relate to our souls as blessings of the upper springs, and those that relate to the body and the life that now is, as blessings of the nether springs. From this story we may learn, (1) That a moderate desire for the comforts and conveniences of this life is no breach of the commandment, 'Thou shalt not covet.' (2) That mutual consultation and joint agreement between husbands and wives, as touching the things they shall seek pertaining to the common good of themselves and their families, is the surest omen of success. (3) That parents should never think that lost which is bestowed upon their children for their advantage. They forget themselves and their relations, who grudge their children what is convenient for them, when they can easily part with it."—*Bush*.

"Chap. xx. describes the Cities of Refuge. The *nearest of kin* to a deceased person had not only the right of redeeming an inheritance that had been forfeited or alienated, but had also authority to slay on the spot the person who had slain his relative. But as a man might *casually* kill another against whom he had no ill will, and with whom he had no quarrel, and might thus be liable to lose his own life undeservedly, at the hands of the *avenger of blood*, these privileged cities were wisely and humanely appointed for the protection of those who had committed accidental homicide, till the cause could receive a judicial hearing from the magistrate. They had authority, according as, upon strict examination, they found him guilty or not of wilful murder, to deliver him up to the *avenger of blood*, or, after the lapse of a certain time, to grant him a discharge.—*That he may dwell among them*. It may be

asked why, if the proper judges were satisfied of his innocence of the crime of wilful murder, he were not at once dismissed from their jurisdiction, and suffered to go at large as usual. The proper reply doubtless is, (1) That he might still be in danger from the enraged passions of the pursuer. (2) He was to await the issue of another trial, ver. 6. (3) His detention was probably designed as somewhat of a punishment for the rashness or heedlessness to which the homicide was owing. Something of a penalty was to be paid for carelessness, as well as for crime."

Forty thousand men, as you may recollect from our previous reading, had crossed the Jordan, and left their wives and their families behind them, partly to be pledges, and partly to be auxiliaries to the children of Israel, on this side Jordan, until they were settled according to their tribes on the western side of that river. These forty thousand men now are released from their military duties, and suffered to recross the Jordan, and return to their families, and take possession of their tents, their homes, and the lands assigned to them. What we now notice, is the beautiful and interesting fact, a precedent for all still, that Joshua, a soldier, with all the responsibilities of warfare on his hands, and with unmanageable masses of Jewish tribes, not accustomed to obedience, at least to implicit obedience, finds a moment for giving a most Christian address to the forty thousand troops whom he dismisses, and speaking to them more like Moses the legislator, or Aaron the priest, than might have been expected of a soldier with so much of other and more secular duties devolving upon him. This shows us that a soldier may be a Christian; that it is not there-

fore true that that profession is incompatible with true piety. The very reverse is often the fact; and as I have told you often, account for it as you like, the most shining instance of Christian piety, and the very earliest and first recorded in the New Testament, is that of the centurion, of whom the Saviour said, "I have not found so great faith in Israel as in this soldier:" and the earliest convert in the Acts of the Apostles was the devout centurion also, who had his devout servant, and one that feared God, and gave alms, and had much praise and favour of all the people. And so here you find Joshua, the leader of the armies of Israel, the successor of the great legislator Moses, giving lessons, advice, and practical instruction, that would put to shame many a modern minister of the gospel: and thus he sets a precedent worthy of all imitation in all ages and under all similar circumstances. "The Lord your God," says this great soldier, "hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them:" he is a promise and covenant keeping God. "Take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul:" full, practical, precious lessons; in observing which their safety, happiness, and prosperity lay. He next adds, "Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren." And the children of Israel did so.

We find that when they came to the borders of Jordan in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, built an altar there. Now the moment that this was heard of, the rest of the tribes of Israel were shocked ; but, like human nature in the 19th century, as well as human nature always and everywhere, they rushed precipitately to a conclusion which they ought to have established on better premises, that this was an altar in opposition to the only altar to be built at Jerusalem, where sacrifices could be offered and God could be worshipped. You will bear in mind that the great law of the Levitical economy was, that there should be in the whole land of Palestine but one spot on which they could offer sacrifices, but one altar by which a priest could officiate ; and there, and there alone, every Jew must come to worship : towards it every Jew, like Daniel, opening his window, must look when he praised God and worshipped him : in short, wherever a Jew was, he turned his eye towards the temple, his heart towards its worship, his whole soul towards Him who was found and disclosed there. It may be asked naturally, Why should there be such a requirement as this ? That temple, and the altar, and the cherubim, and the mercy-seat, and the glory shining between, were all typical of Christ Jesus ; who calls his body the temple. And just as the Jew looked to that temple, and offered only on that altar, and turned himself towards it when he prayed or praised God ; so the Christian now is not to look to any ecclesiastical altar, or east or west, or north or south, all of which are ceremonial arrangements that have perished with the Levitical economy ; but when he

praises, when he prays, when he gives, he is to look to Christ, who fills the east as much as the west, and the north as much as the south; and is present wheresoever two or three meet together in his name. You can see then how monstrously absurd is the modern notion that in order to worship God you must look towards the east. If 1800 years could be expunged, that would be proper enough; but as the looking to the altar was ceremony, a typical ceremony; and as the very end and object of the typical ceremony is come, Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; we are not now to look like the Jew to the quarters of the compass; but we are to adore like the Christian on this mount and on that mount: and here, there, and everywhere; only looking to, leaning on, Christ Jesus, our Priest, our Altar, our Sacrifice, our all. And just because there was an altar in the ancient economy, there ought to be none now; because we "have an altar of which they have no right to eat that serve the sanctuary:" the whole Christian congregation is all chancel: the whole of the spot you tread upon is holy ground. It is Christ who is our altar; it is faith that leans on and looks to that altar; and any attempt to put up altars now is to invert, and desecrate, and destroy, the very peculiarities of the Christian dispensation, which swept them all away, that we might worship God through Christ only in spirit and in truth.

Now because of the importance of the altar, therefore, in Jerusalem, and where the temple was built, these Christian Jews, for such they were, were shocked that the Reubenites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and the children of Gad, should build what seemed

another altar. This looked like opposition ; and they instantly sent a deputation to the half tribe of Manasseh, and the Reubenites, and the children of Gad ; and they spoke to them in a style, certainly rash and rather violent, if not calculated to irritate, rather than likely to throw oil upon the troubled waters. They said to them, "What trespass is this ye have committed?" They scolded first, and inquired next : whereas the duty would have been to have inquired first, and not scolded, but pointed out the error, and gently remonstrated against its continuance. But this was human nature. They said, "What trespass is this ye have committed:" when in fact they had committed none ; as the subsequent explanation will show : "to turn away from following the Lord, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the Lord? Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us? Have we not had enough of the consequences of such apostacy long ago? Have you not seen what followed the sin of Achan : and are you going to rebel against God, who is your Saviour, and the object of your worship; and to bring down judgment and tribulation upon the whole land? What do you mean by this?" Let us guard against similar prejudging. These tribes, however, charged with this great criminality, set us a very beautiful example. They did not interrupt the embassy in the midst of its utterance, shocked at the violence of its words and the severity of its censure and its injustice too; as we are very prone to do when we are accused by another, and the temper rises, till we can scarcely wait to hear the conclusion of the accusation ; but they meekly and patiently let the accusing parties say their say, and then gently,

with a soft answer fitted to turn away wrath, even if it had not been sustained by a good cause, they said, "The Lord God of Gods, he will know, and you shall see, if we have committed this great sin: a sin that we are shocked at the very idea of being guilty of, and that we trust by grace we should be the last ever to be guilty of. For the fact is, though it looks to you like an altar, yet it is no altar: it is a mere commemorative monument: so that as the river Jordan rolls between us, we on the one side of it and you on the other; and as rivers have often made two peoples of one nation, and created antagonism where there ought to be concord, we have erected this monument simply to be a memorial of what we are, where we worship, what God we serve: so that when people shall come after us, they will see that though a river divides us from you, it cannot divide our hearts from your hearts, or our souls from your God."

This explanation was most Christian in spirit, and most conclusive in logic; and we are happy to see that the accusing party, instead of doing like many accusers still, trying to justify the violence of their temper by saying, "You give us occasion enough: or why did you not explain it?" they at once gave in, at once admitted they were wrong, acknowledged that these tribes were perfectly right: and then they joined together in worshipping God, and in seeking his blessing upon all the tents and homes of scattered Israel. Surely it is true, a "soft answer turneth away wrath." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." A little patience in the most trying circumstances is possessed of wondrous efficacy. Even amid sad misapprehensions of the good, and still sadder

misinterpretations of the bad, we may sustain our hearts by the blessed persuasion that God sees and knows us, and will bring forth our righteousness as the shining light.

ADDRESS OF JOSHUA.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JOSHUA'S AGE. HIS HUMILITY. THANKFULNESS. SOURCES OF SUCCESS.

ON the last verse of the preceding chapter I quote the following *just* remarks :—

“34. *Called the altar* Ed. It is remarkable that the last word in this clause, ‘Ed,’ *a witness*, is not found in the original, at least in the common copies, though others are said to contain it, and it occurs in the Arabic and Syriac versions. Our translators have properly supplied it in Italics, as it is the word which the sense evidently requires. How it comes to be lacking in the common editions of the Hebrew it is impossible to determine. This altar, upon which there was probably an inscription, was henceforth to be a witness of the relation in which they stood to God and to Israel, and of their concurrence with the rest of the tribes in the great fundamental truth, that ‘the Lord he is God,’ he and no other; and that he was to be worshipped in no other way, and at no other place, than he had himself prescribed. It was, moreover, a witness to posterity of their care to transmit their religion pure and unimpaired to them, and would be a witness against them, if ever they should forsake God and turn to idolatry. From the incidents above

related we may gather, (1) That the best meant things may afford cause of suspicion ; as these are sometimes suspected of aiming to effect a breach in the unity of the church, who are most diligently labouring to heal her divisions, and to preserve to posterity the purity of her doctrines and worship. (2) It can do our brethren no injury to be jealous over them with a godly jealousy, even when we may be mistaken in our fears. (3) Nothing will so soon kindle the zeal of a faithful and devoted spirit, as the symptoms of apostacy from God in others, because to such an one nothing is so dear as his glory. (4) Rising corruptions and dangerous errors should in the spirit of meekness, be resisted as soon as broached, lest the evil leaven, being permitted to spread, should leaven the whole mass. (5) The testimony of a good conscience is the most effectual support against the heaviest accusations.”—[*Bush.*]

This chapter contains the last and parting words of the illustrious general, who led the armies of his nation, the anointed battalions assigned him by God, through unparalleled difficulties, and hard battles every one of which was a victory, till they were settled fully and completely, according to the arrangement of God, in Canaan ; a type of the better rest that remaineth for the people of God.

It is surely most interesting to see a soldier, after all the harassments of war, in which his mind must necessarily have been absorbed with its anxieties, in his last moments merge every recollection save his relationship to God and his responsibility for high moral relations to those that were about him ; and address them in language so rich in thought, so

precious in precept, so solemn in warning, that from the lips of Aaron, the anointed priest, there never fell richer or better tidings; nor from Moses, the great lawgiver, a more practical and precious farewell discourse.

It is said, "Joshua waxed old and stricken in age." I may be pardoned for reminding the reader of what I have often alluded to—the protracted period to which men lived in those days; and to which, if everything were as it should be, in all probability we should live still. Joshua was only old and stricken in age when he was 110 years old; and even at 109 years of age he was strong and vigorous, and fit for all the contingencies and the arduous undertakings of war. But now, at 110, we read he was waxed old and stricken in age, and about to depart. He therefore calls for the elders, and officers, and judges, and tells them, "I am old and stricken in age." And then he recapitulates all that had happened to them; all they had achieved; but in every instance, he takes not one ray of the glory for a wreath about his own brow; but gives it up undivided unto Him who taught his fingers to fight, and gave him the victory. He says, "Ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you." I have been but the sword in his hand—he has wielded it; I have obeyed his plans and prescriptions—his is the glory of all the success. And lest you should think—so anxious is this dying soldier to let God have all the praise of all that had been gained—there is any credit in what I have done, I indeed have divided unto you these nations; but then it was by lot; and as it is God

that determines the lot, therefore I receive no credit and deserve nothing of the glory. And again he tells them, "The Lord your God, he shall expel them from before you."

And now, he says, seeing that God has prospered you in the past; seeing he has fulfilled the promise he made in reference to the partitionment of this land; seeing he has destroyed fortresses, dismantled fortifications, levelled mountains, divided broad streams, and carried you from victory to victory, until you are now settled according to the prophecy of the dying Patriarch of old; therefore now show your gratitude by being "very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left." Thus we see what is the best expression of gratitude to God; namely, obedience to his word and law. In other words, it is thankfulness not with the lip only, which is easy enough; but with the life, which is our ceaseless and daily duty. And therefore he says, "Cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye have done unto this day." Cleave unto him in prosperity, giving him the praise of it; cleave unto him in adversity, looking to him for support under it; cleave unto him in sickness, who is the only Physician that can heal; cleave unto him in death; for he is the Lord and the Giver of life. No man that thus cleaves to Him ever will be disappointed or forsaken.

He recapitulates again what God had done for them; and promises that should they do as God requires, "One man of you shall chase a thousand." We have often learned in the course of our reading of this most interesting book of war how frequently

victory is promised to principle; how allegiance of the heart to God is reckoned a surer pioneer of success than the sharpest sword, the most numerous battalions, or the bravest hearts. Constantly we read of those that are faithful to God chasing one a thousand; and again and again we read of those that forsake God being so forsaken that one of their enemies will chase them, though they be a thousand. These are truths and facts, and most suggestive lessons; and we may rest assured that national success in a just and a righteous war is at least as much contingent upon Christianity at home as it is upon courage, tactics, and numbers in the battle field. And if we as a nation are undutiful to God; if we forsake him; if we desecrate his Sabbaths; if we despise his ordinances; if we undervalue our privileges; if in the midst of great light we plunge into great wickedness; we may rest assured that though every soldier in the field were a Wellington, and every sailor on the deck were a Nelson, there is, and can be, no abiding victory; and there ought not to and will not be victory and success to a nation untrue to its first duties, undutiful to Him by whom kings reign and princes decree justice.

He repeats, "Take therefore good heed unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God." And then he tells them he was going the way of all the earth; and appeals to their recollection, that not one promise had failed, not one prophecy had been without its fulfilment; and finally he reminds them of the awful consequences of transgressing the law of the Lord their God.

THE WAY OF ALL THE EARTH.

“And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth : and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you ; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.”—JOSHUA xxiii. 14.

WHAT a change has passed upon the human race since the peaceful, holy, and happy days of Paradise ! The way then and there was through ceaseless sunshine, smooth, and peaceful and ever ascending upward, and brightening as humanity rose ; the very hours of life measured, like the hours on the dial, by sunshine. But since the Fall, a change has passed upon man so thorough, and an effect has been produced on his life so disastrous, that the way of all the earth is not now, as it then was, upward, the heart increasing in capacity of happiness, and happiness rushing in as its capacities increased ; it is now downward to the grave : for “it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment.” The way of all the earth now is rough, rugged, and strewed with flints, and covered with thorns and briers : and over it are cares like clouds continually passing. Graves are its waymarks ; and the sick, the aged, and the infirm, our companionship onward to the end. Our march thus, and in this way, is the way of all the earth ; in the beautiful words of the poet :—

“ A funeral march to the grave.”

Nor is there any living exception now to this condition. All must tread it; the only two exceptions in history are Enoch and Elijah : but with these two exceptions, which were lights incidentally shed down to prevent despair, like a shroud, falling upon mankind, all, from Methusaleh, who lived to 1000 years, and the infant that has not lived a thousand minutes, must tread the way of all the earth. Moses, the illustrious lawgiver of Israel; Aaron, the eloquent priest; Joshua, the courageous general; all have trod this way before us. The distinctions of genius, of rank and of office, of youth and of age, of wealth and of poverty, all, as far as relates to this, go for nothing. The minister from the sanctuary, the senator from the Parliament, the judge from the bench, like Joshua must equally go the way of all the earth. There is no exception to this law, there is no exemption nor discharge in this warfare. Every whitening hair on the head, every deepening wrinkle on the brow, every faltering of the beating heart, every lessening of the rapid pace, every weakening of muscular force, are multiplying evidences that you are on the downward side of the hill, that you have passed the summit, and are far on in the way appointed for all living.

An old man called upon me the other day, venerable in years, with a beard of great length, with much of majesty in his appearance; he said he was a student of prophecy, and wished to talk to me. He did so for an hour. He said, one of the truths he had discovered, and that he was preaching in Germany, and indeed over the world, wherever he could have a hearing, was the immortality of the body, as well as the immortality

of the soul. I asked, "Do you mean to say that the body is not to die?" And he said he believed that the age was come when this dispensation was so near mingling with the next that there was a remnant, the hundred and forty-four thousand, now emerging, who should not die—literally not die, and that he was one of them. I said, "Well, I dare not say so. I can see no warrant from God's Word to conclude so. But do you believe of yourself, now an aged man, between sixty and seventy, that you will not die?" He said, "Yes, I do." "And do you believe that your body is immortal?" "I do." I said, "Have you ever looked into a mirror?" "Yes." "Do you notice in your beard the long whitening hairs? Do you know what these mean? These are death; that is death begun already. And for you to tell me you will not die, is to tell me what is contradicted by your very face; for the finger marks of death are upon you, and you are moving the way of all the earth to the grave, unless the Lord come and you are changed."

This universal decay, the consummation of which is death, however, is not peculiar to man. Owing to that blight which has fallen upon all things, death is, "The way of all the earth;" and includes not humanity only, but all visible and created things.

Look around and you see it. The flowers wither; the sun sets; the green verdure of spring, and the blossoms of summer, all put on, in a few fleet months, the yellow tints of the foliage of autumn; the river rushes by and is merged in the main. Minutes mark the journey of some; months the way of others; years the march of others; but all equally, and sooner or later, descend into the grave. We

can see it in all things about us, at home, abroad, in the city, and in the country. I hear the tramp of death in the sounds of the echoing hours; I see the shadow of death sweep past in every cloud that obscures the sky. Every sunset is one day less for me to live, and another stage nearer to that point when I must die. One day, it is as true as any fact upon earth, the morning sunshine will burst into the casement of your chamber, but you will not see it; and one evening the sun will set, and the stars come out with all the freshness of their first creation, but you will not see one of them. Affection will whisper to you asking for an answer, and there will not be even an echo: insensible to all about you, unconscious of all that is over you; and cold, and still, having no share in anything that is done, you will have finished your march, fought your last battle, closed your warfare; and have gone the way of all the earth.

In another sense, it is important to notice that this is not the whole. Whilst the body goes the way of all the earth, the soul must go the way of all spirits. And in every instance, the soul, as soon as it has laid down its earthly, material, crumbling tenement, will emerge not the least scathed, and stand face to face with God at the judgment-seat of Christ. We speak of a general judgment; and so there is. But there is also a continuous judgment: and if we at this moment had the anointed eye and the circumcised ear, we might see ceaseless crowds of souls darkening the very air with their shadows as they rush to the judgment-seat; and we might hear the reverberations around of the last trumpet, and the words of the decisive sentence, "Come unto me: or go:" for the present is the fore-

court of the future, death is the vestibule of eternity : and the instant that the body is gone the way of all the earth, the soul is gone the way of all living spirits, and is at the judgment-seat of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is just this fact that gives to death its infinite importance—for it is the fixture of the direction in which the soul is to move for ever. That direction may be on earth heavenwards, or it may be the reverse. But when death takes place, the impulse that the soul received here, lasts unexhausted for ever and for ever. What a solemn thought, that an impulse may be given within the walls of the humblest church or chapel, to a soul that will determine the course, and the direction of the course of that soul either in happiness or in misery for ever and for ever. It is a very solemn fact, that, as the tree falls, so it lies—as death finds us, so, and exactly so, eternity receives us ; that he that is just at death is just for ever ; he that is unholy at death is unholy for ever. In fact, what we call death, so far as the soul is concerned, is only this lower life being lifted into an upper life ; that upper life to be happiness or misery, according to the complexion of the soul's life here. We are too prone to think of the body as the man ; it is all that we see, it is true ; but we do not call the dial plate upon the watch the watch : it is only the mark of the movements of the watch. And what I now see, and what you now see, is not the man, but the tent in which he lives, the medium of his communication with a world of matter, and which he does not need the instant he has been lifted higher, and becomes an inmate of the world of spirits. Nay, even in this life one has some idea of what that life must be, in which the soul lives with-

out the body. For instance, I am one day absorbed in deep thought, looking into some favourite subject, tracing some idea. Now what takes place? Whilst I am absorbed in my study, I do not hear the clock strike; and yet my ears are as keen and susceptible of sound as ever. I do not see the furniture in the room; I do not even take notice of persons passing in and out. But why? My nerves are as sensitive, all my senses are as acute. It is that the soul during that moment is insulated from the body, and from the world, and lives the soul life: as if to be a tangible demonstration, that when the body is completely taken away, the soul may live, and think, and pursue its thoughts, only with intenser force, with greater clearness and power. Indeed, after all, death is but another world to live in. We are at this moment ceaselessly changing our worlds; all of us outlive successive worlds; and life and death are simply different steps and stages in the course of our outliving successive worlds. Our world of to-day, we know quite well, is not our world of ten years ago. We are as completely in a new world to-day, as different from what we were in ten years ago, as if we had stepped from this world into what we call the next. The world of manhood is not the world of youth; and the world of old age is not the world of manhood. Each of these has been a successive world; and the last step, called by Joshua going the way of all the earth, is only a step further along the same road into a fourth world, whose sun has no western limit, and whose bright sky will never be darkened by a shadow or by a shower.

It is in this view of going the way of all the earth

that it seems so interesting to look upon old age. What is old age? It is man making ready to take his last step; detaching himself more from what is visible, and audible, and palpable, in order to make ready to go into the rest that remaineth for the people of God. In old age your walks become fewer; your disposable force for action is much less; your sight grows dimmer; your hearing grows much duller; your hand parts with much of its cunning. What is the significance of this? Just the twilight of this life deepening into the shadow of the grave, on which unexpectedly will burst the splendours of the everlasting morn. What are all these symptoms of old age? It is your withdrawing from the world; it is the tide of this world's interest ebbing away from you, and all you are: you do not hear its news as you once heard them; you do not see its scenes as you once saw them; you do not sympathise with its busy people as you once sympathised with them; and the heart that is within, by its slowing and more solemn beat, like the curfew bell that warns the man that all life's passions, sympathies, desires, must soon be quenched, that on the now cold altar may be kindled a flame that shall never fade, a glory that shall never die.

But it is very often remarked, Is there not evidence that sickness, disease, and palsy, and paralysis, so act upon the body that the soul is involved also in the shock? I do not believe it. You may differ from me; perhaps physiologists and physicians, who know better, may object to it: but I do believe, and I think you will be satisfied by the simple illustrations I give, that even in sickness, which ends in death, and anti-

cipates old age ; in insanity itself, and even in idiocy in its worst form, we find in each purely a disease of the body: and though the great inhabitant within may be trammelled, oppressed, and embarrassed in its action, it is yet as powerful, as clear, as vigorous, as in the most sane, or the most perfect and healthy specimen of the human race. Let me try to illustrate this. You say when a person is struck by paralysis or palsy, the mind is enfeebled. It is not so; it is not the soul that is enfeebled; but the medium of the manifestation of it that is interfered with: it is not the machinery of the watch that has gone wrong; it is only the dial plate that has become turned round, and therefore does not tell the hours accurately. Suppose my feet are paralysed, I cannot walk; but my mind is not the least affected thereby. Carry it further; my brain is oppressed, and becomes torpid; but my mind is not thereby affected. We see the feet may be paralysed, the hands may be paralysed: and, carrying it further, may not the brain be paralysed, and yet the soul that is within may not be affected? The darkness of London in a November fog, is not the extinction of the sun, but only fogs and clouds intercepting his bright beams. An eclipse of the sun is not the withdrawal of that luminary, but only another body intercepting its light. So paralysis, palsy, decay, disease, insanity itself, are not the destruction of the mind, they all are diseases of the body. Let the fog be dissolved, and the sun will send forth his beams in greater brightness; let the earth move a little further on its axis, and the eclipsed luminary will appear; let health be restored to the body, and the mind will break out

with all its pristine vigour and force. The analogy seems to me complete. And to carry this still further; when the body, the intercepting cloud, is dissolved completely; when the body, the opaque interposition between my soul and the world with which it has to communicate, is removed; then that soul, emerging from the shadow, shall shine as the brightness of the stars in the kingdom of our Father for ever and ever; putting forth unprecedentedly glorious action, having capacities of great enjoyment; and beginning only to live when its life is unfettered, untrammelled, and disentangled from the body. Thus, while the body goes the way of all the earth, we can see even from analogy that the soul goes the way of all spirits.

And when a Christian descends into the grave, the way of all flesh, how blessed the thought, he not only goes the way of all spirits, but he goes the way also of all saints; and beyond the valley of the shadow of death, he can see the heights of the heavenly Jerusalem, the rest that remaineth for the people of God. His path through the grave is to him not an unknown one; it has been beaten by a Saviour's footsteps; it has been consecrated by a Saviour's presence: and whether it be the deep, deep sea, or the gory grave in the battle-field, it is true of each of them as much as it was of the cave in the garden of Arimathæa, "Come and see where Christ lay." He has taken the sting from death; he has taken all its terrors from the grave. A Christian knows its terminus, he knows its triumphant ascent; and he can enter into it, saying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" And the Christian not only knows

this, but he knows too that this body he lays down in that very grave he shall come from heaven again to take up, and to put on as the resurrection robe in immortal beauty and perfection. This is not my conjecture, it is the very words of the apostle, when he comforts the Thessalonians, "Them that sleep in Christ will he bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. Them that sleep in Christ will Christ bring with him." But who are they? The souls that are in glory; them Christ will bring with him. And then what takes place? They that are on earth are changed; they that he brings with him put on their resurrection robes. It does seem to me a very beautiful thought that to that very grave in which the dead, decaying tenement shall be laid up; to that very spot the soul shall come down when Christ comes; and the trumpet that penetrates the homes of the living and the chambers of the dead shall bring up not another body, but that very body, disinfected of all decay; pure, holy, perfect; and the soul shall put it on and be caught up, and so shall both be for ever with the Lord. He that brings the blossom and the green leaf from the dry stem, and out of a little dust and raindrops can evolve all the rich blossoms of summer, can turn this corruptible into that incorruptible, so that death shall be swallowed up in everlasting victory.

Thus a text that seems so humiliating has in its bosom suggestive, joyous, and precious truths. It

teaches us we must go the way of all the earth; and these bodies be laid in the last deposit of humanity, the grave; not in a prison house, but, as we call it in our language, a cemetery. What is a cemetery? *κοιμητήριον*, "a sleeping place." But that would be a strange sleep that has no waking. And therefore the very body that you leave shall be raised again. And then as the body is laid down, the soul goes the way of all spirits; but in the case of a Christian, the soul goes the way of all saints. And we can see at once how the souls of those that we knew on earth, prior to the resurrection, and during the interval between the present moment and the trumpet voice, which have left the bodies that we laid in the grave, are now conscious, living, susceptible of enjoyment, capable of thought; in fact, they never lived on earth as they live now; for with all the perfections of the body, it acts as a drag upon the soul. It was not meant originally to act thus; but it does so now by reason of sin, and we know, and see, and feel it every day. Take away the revelation in this book, and there is no conceivable reason why man should die. A physiologist once told me, a man of great genius, that if it were possible for a stranger from another orb to come into this world, and see a man in perfect health and vigour; see the heart beating, the lungs playing, the arteries, the veins, the whole system of the human organism in action; and if he were asked, How long will that machinery last; how long will it go on? he would say, There is such admirable provision for waste and supply, that this machine must go on for ever and ever. The body is not like a machine, that

wears out by constant use; there is in it a provision for restoring the fading tissue; and consequently there is a peculiarity in the human body which does not exist in machinery. Then why does it not go on for ever? Why, at a given point, does the heart beat slower, the muscles become hardened, the tide of life ebb away from the outer shores of the senses? It is man's sin that explains all; for the wages of sin is death. You need no demonstration that this book is the inspiration of God; it is the only solution of mysteries, the only explanation of otherwise inexplicable phenomena. And blessed be God! while it explains the mystery of death, it unfolds to us the sure and blessed hope of the resurrection and the life.

Having thus looked at Joshua's declaration of his personal experience, let me now turn to what he says had been his experience in reference to God's doings. He declares, appealing to the children of Israel, "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake." His experience is extremely minute; "not one thing hath failed." Every prediction also in the word of God already fulfilled has not only a fulfilment in the bulk, but has been verbatim and minutely fulfilled; showing that he that predicted it was inspired. Joshua says, not merely all things as a whole have happened; but he says, "Not one thing hath failed of all the good things that the Lord spake concerning you." Here you have Joshua's testimony; and we might appeal to others; God gave Abraham a promise that he should have a progeny countless as the stars in the sky, as the sands by the sea shore;

and he gave him that promise when all nature said, No, and all experience said, No, and all skill said, No. It came to pass ; and though Abraham did not live to see it, we see it, in the multiplying accessions every day to the cause and kingdom of Christ. Joseph was promised that his sheaf should be higher than the sheaves of his brethren, and that the sheaves of his brethren should bow down to his. Here we may see how when God gives a prophecy, and I quote these illustrations to show it, he gives it in such a way that everything in our experience for a long time will protest against the possibility of its being fulfilled ; but everything in the world will demonstrate that not one thing in it has failed. The promise already quoted was made to Joseph ; and what do we find ? At first all runs against it. He was cast by his brethren into a pit. He might say to himself, " Now I find the promise impossible." Then he was sold as a slave. " How can God be fulfilling his promise that I shall be superior to my brethren ? " He is falsely accused by one in the highest place of authority and power ; and he is cast into prison as a condemned and guilty criminal. " Surely," he might have said, now, " the promise that my sheaf shall be higher than my brethren's, and that their sheaves shall bow down to mine, is completely falsified." But he waited ; he did not so conclude ; and what was the issue ? That the very things that seemed to him in the meantime all misfortune, all disaster, all contradiction, were the very things that proved essential to the evolution of the ultimate result, and to the fulfilment of God's glorious promise ; for he did live, and the life that he lived in the end was so far the direct creation of the

instruments that seemed so adverse to it; he did live to see all the sheaves of his brethren bow down to his, and his own higher than them all. So here, in the land of Canaan, everything was against the fulfilment of this promise. When the Israelites, oppressed as slaves in Egypt, longed to break loose from it, we read that Pharaoh, that he might utterly exterminate them, ordered the slaughter of every one of their male infants. Afterwards, when they tried to escape and with difficulty made their exodus, Pharaoh crushed it with all the force at his disposal. When they marched out into the desert, Pharaoh pursued them; when they set forward to run, the Red Sea stood before them. When they were in the great desert, with neither a taper on earth nor a light in the sky, their march seemed impossible. When they tried to cross through near routes, enemies came forth, resisted and opposed them.' When they came to Canaan itself, they had the swelling Jordan to cross; they had Jericho to reduce, they had other fortresses to subdue; and then they had to arrange the partitionment of the land. But though all things seemed to resist and oppose them, till we might well suppose they were constrained to cry, "All these things are against us;" yet the issue was that they were settled according to all their tribes, according to the prescription of God; and literally they knew that not one good thing that God had promised had failed them. God gives you a promise, whatever that promise may be: but he makes you feel a long time that instead of its being fulfilled, everything is going in the very opposite direction. What is the end or meaning of that discipline? You know as long as you can feel the

bottom in the sea you will not swim ; as long as you can feel the earth beneath you, you will not look up and trust. Now God takes all the ground from beneath your feet, that you may cast yourselves upon his faithfulness ; and believe, in the face of all things opposing, that God is able even to raise an Isaac from the dead ; for “ we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead.” Take just one promise ; that one you have often sung and read, “ The Lord is my shepherd : I shall not want.” And I daresay there is scarcely one here who does not say, “ This surely cannot be true, for I have very often wanted ; and therefore how can it be said, The Lord is my shepherd : I shall not want ?” Let me show you. First of all, of things that you want, there are some things that are redundant, and some things that are necessary. Now God will not give you redundancies, but he will always give you necessities ; he may not give you wine, but he will give you water ; he may not give you the lace that adorns the robe, but he will give you the garment that shelters you from the cold. He may not give you a royal palace, but he will not withhold from you a prophet’s chamber. Then of things that are necessary, some things are very desirable, and others not so. For instance, sickness is not desirable, but it is very necessary ; for we are told it was the experience of one, “ It is good for me that I am afflicted.” And of things desirable, some are seasonable and others not. If a child cry for strawberries in March, you cannot gratify it ; if another ask for apples or peaches in spring, you cannot gratify it. They may be desired, they may be desirable, but

they are impossible. And again, we very often ask for health; it is very desirable; but then it may be most unseasonable; and therefore God sends sickness, which is seasonable; that you may feel that sickness working out everlasting and blessed health. Again, "I shall not want," is illustrated by another fact. We often want or wish for a thing that in itself is good; but God may see it is not good to give that; but instead, he gives you a perfect and more than sufficient equivalent. If God takes away one thing from you that you have set your heart upon, he gives you the same thing in another shape, far better for you. We are such imperfect creatures that when we ask for a good thing, we always assign to God the shape in which it is to come. Well, God says, No; ask of me what is good; but I may give you not it, but an equivalent for it; and I will give it you, but not at the time you look for it, but at the time far more expedient for you. And again, this promise, "I shall not want," is fulfilled in another way. If I am hungry, I want bread; but if I am not hungry, I do not want bread. And therefore, want that is satisfied, and the absence of want altogether, is just the same thing. If I want a thousand pounds, and never get it, I am miserable; but if I have no wish for it and feel no want of it, I am just as happy as if I had it, and perhaps much more so. So that God may not give us what we want, but he may deaden the sense of want, and make us cease to desire it. Again, some wants are real, and some are imaginary. A sick man, owing to diseased appetites, wants many things that the physician will not give him; and it is the greatest tenderness and kindness of the physician not to give them. So we often

want many things from God which would positively be our own destruction. God therefore will not gratify the diseased appetite with what the patient asks him for ; but he will satisfy the hungry with good things, and never send them empty away. And if you take a review of your whole life, you know that things you craved most after would, if you had obtained them, have probably been your ruin ; and you know that a thousand things have been given you you neither deserved, nor expected, and that you cannot trace to any ultimate source save to Him who has not allowed one good thing of all the things that he promised to fail you, or not to be given you. Are you not conscious that an unseen hand has often held you back when you were bent on going forward ; do you not remember that an unseen force has shaped your whole course ? Have you not felt a power, silent, but ceaseless, giving you impetus, and determining the direction in which that impetus was to act ? Are you not convinced that God has met you at corners, at nooks, at turnings ; in the counting house, the warehouse, in the sanctuary, in the closet, in the study ; and that some one has whispered in the heart, some one touched its springs, some one quenched the rising passions, some one extinguished the evil desire ; and that your whole life has been a life as completely embosomed in miracles as was the life of Moses and Joshua in the desert on their march to Canaan ? Can any man with his eyes open and his senses about him, be an atheist, or doubt or deny in the retrospect of his biography that God has been with him ? Some one mysteriously often saved you from yourself. Have you not felt, every man, some one snatch you from

the very heart of a temptation? And who was this? God. And what does it prove? That not one good thing of all that he has promised to you has ever failed or faltered in the past. And if you look now into the future, what does this teach you? That God, who has been faithful to every promise, and not allowed one jot or tittle to drop from it till it was fulfilled, in the past, will be faithful to his minutest and his greatest promises in reference to the future. Do you ever fear you will want bread? What is his promise? You shall get it if you be one of his people; for "your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." If you be one of God's people, do you sometimes fear lest you be led into great and overwhelming temptation? What is his promise? "No temptation hath overtaken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape."

Has Satan sifted you, and searched you, and tried you? or rather, has Satan desired to do so? Blessed thought! before Satan even desired to try Peter, the Great Intercessor had anticipated him, and prayed for him, that his faith might fail not. Do you fear, what you estimate aright—the force of sin? His promise is, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Do you fear sorrow, grief, bitterness of heart? "Like as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity you." How beautiful. "For he knoweth our frame;" what an exquisite touch is that! We miss the force, the latent force, that is in that wonderful book, the Bible, by not pondering on its clauses. "He knoweth

our frame, he remembereth that we are dust ; that as for man, as the flower of the field, so he flourisheth ; the wind passeth over it, and it is gone the way of all the earth." Is not that touching enough ? Hear one of God's most exquisite passages ; " As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Who does not know that a mother will pity and minister to aches in a child that a father will not even recognise ; that a mother's tender, watchful, and ceaseless inspection sees in her infant and in her child ills, and pains, and foreshadows of approaching ills, that no physician and no father can see ? Thus God employs a figure the tenderest, the most beautiful, the most suggestive of all affectionate sympathy and care ; " As one whom his mother comforteth." There is not such a holy word in the English tongue as that of mother ; there is not a relationship so tender, so beautiful, so precious ; and that son who can ever wound or grieve a mother's heart is meet only to be banished from Christendom, and to herd with the offscourings of the earth. " As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." " I will not leave you : I will not forsake you." Such then are God's promises in reference to the future.

And when you have to go down into the valley of the shadow of death, that God who has been with you in your sorrows will be with you in your last sickness ; that God who has been with you in your joys will not forsake you in the hour of death. The day of your decease will only be to you the commencement of an eternal day ; as time presents its night side, eternity will present its bright and its day side ; your last breath will make you free of the universe ; and when

you leave a world in which Christ has died, it will only be to enter on a world where Christ lives, your portion and your exceeding great reward. And therefore a Christian can say in language, oh! so precious, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

What a noble faith is ours; what a fool he is who despises it; a blessed faith, that consecrates our weddings, that sanctifies our sorrows, that comforts us in our losses, that is with man always and everywhere as sunshine, support, guidance, present peace, everlasting joy.

What a contrast between the death of Joshua, and the death of many of the great ones of this world. Lord Chesterfield owned his wretchedness at the close of a gay and dissipated life. Voltaire said to his physician, "I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months more life." Gibbon, the eloquent and great historian, said, "My prospect of the future is dark and doubtful indeed." But Moses meekly put off this mortal on Mount Nebo, to put on that immortal. Joshua, "I go the way of all the earth; and not one good thing hath failed me." David, "Though my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, in all things well ordered and sure." And Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." And Paul, "I know in whom I have believed." And Baxter, with his last breath, as he saw the forelights of heaven, "I am almost well." "The victory is almost won." What a contrast! To collect all the sayings of the depraved,

the abandoned, and the unbelieving; and to contrast with these the sayings of God's people in every age, would be in itself an irresistible credential of the truth of Christianity. The acknowledgment of the first class I have quoted is disappointment, reverse, pain, grief; every one of them admitting that life had deceived them, that they were disappointed, grieved, vexed, and remorse was their only portion; but the acknowledgment of God's people was that not one thing had failed; that they had got more than they ever dreamed of; and they departed in peace, blessing God.

Let me die the death of the righteous! and may my last days be like his: peace, endless peace. Amen.

Note.—"Ye know—that not one thing hath failed, &c. The same appeal which is here made by Joshua to Israel after sixty years' experience, may be made to every believer that ever lived. We may bring forth every promise from the Bible, and then search the annals of the world, and inquire of every creature in it, and one single instance will be sought in vain of God's violating or forgetting a promise. The accomplishment may have been delayed or brought to pass in a way that was not expected, but the whole world may be challenged to impeach his veracity, or contradict the assertion that '*all which he hath promised is come to pass: not one thing hath failed thereof.*' But let it not be forgotten that the veracity of God is as much pledged for the execution of his threatenings, as for the performance of his promises. The one is a proof of the other. Yet among the world of the impenitent where is there a mind divested of the floating impression, that mercy will in some way interpose to stay the outgoings of wrath? How many, alas! are now experiencing in hell what they would not believe on earth! The subsequent history of the chosen people abundantly shows that both the apostacy here deprecated and the threatenings here denounced did actually

take place. Let then every Christian fear as he reads, 'If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee.' The worldly, carnal, sensual Christian has no more right to expect indulgence from the justice of God than the disobedient Jew."—*Bush*.

DEATH OF JOSHUA AND ELEAZAR.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CORROBORATIVE PROOFS OF THE FACTS IN THE BOOK. JOSHUA'S
COUNSEL. GOD'S DISTINGUISHING LOVE. A MEMORIAL STONE.
JOSEPH'S BONES.

WE close our study of one of the most interesting and not the least instructive books in the whole Old Testament history. That this book is genuine every Jew will attest. We can appeal to the heathen, where memorials of the facts recorded in the book have been scattered and held in traditions, or recorded in the heathen historians of Rome and of cotemporaneous nations. Thus, for instance, there are ancient monuments that still prove that the Carthaginians were a colony that originally fled before the victorious conqueror who was planting the children of Israel in the land of Canaan. We have also traces of other facts in the traditions of the heathen; of the sun and the moon standing still; of the shower of hail which is mentioned here; which was construed by the heathen to be a shower of stones that overwhelmed the enemies of Hercules. And just as drift wood scattered over the ocean indicates the wreck and proves the existence of some noble ship; so these fragments scattered through heathendom indicate by their very existence the great facts recorded in this book. Here you have the original; there you have the more or less distorted tradition. And as a bad sovereign

proves the prior fact of good ones, and a forged bank note proves the existence of good ones; so these traditions indicate the existence of a true and faithful narrative of facts as they actually occurred.

We have in this chapter, Joshua, the victorious conqueror of Canaan, resting from the severe and arduous conflicts in which he had played so conspicuous a part, and spending his last breath in commemorating to the children of Israel the rare national blessings they had received; the meagre returns they had made; and the solemn obligations that devolved upon them if they would maintain their land and enjoy any longer the favour and the sunshine of the countenance of God.

It has been justly observed, "The pious servants of God may be disabled through age and infirmities from continuing their personal exertions, but they will never relax their zeal in the service of their divine Master; and what they want in effective labours, they will endeavour to supply by stimulating and confirming the zeal of others. As Moses, at an advanced age, renewed the covenant in the plains of Moab which had been first entered into at Horeb forty years before, so Joshua on this occasion imitates his example, and makes it his last labour to engage the tribes of Israel once more to give themselves up to God, in a perpetual covenant. Thus the good effects of his influence would remain when he himself was taken from them. 'We must never think our work for God done till our life is done; and if he lengthen out our days beyond what we thought, we must conclude it is because he has some further service for us to do.'"—

Henry.

How beautiful is it to see the aged soldier looking away from the fields of conflict, and giving his last advice, the weightiest and the most solemn that he felt, to fear God, to love him, to keep his commandments; and that thus the victories he had gained would be the precursors of prosperity and of lasting peace. War may secure a nation from the foe; but it is only piety that can make permanent peace in the midst of it; the peace that passeth understanding. Diplomacy may give a temporary quiet; but principle alone can give a lasting peace. Management may give nations a respite; but only the spread and domination of living religion can make nations what they ought to be, and what they may be, blessings to themselves, benefactors to all that are around them.

Joshua in the first instance appeals to all the historic facts which we have read in successive chapters. He mentions first of all that it was by grace and in sovereignty that Abraham was selected on the other side of the Jordan, and made the father of a great nation. It was in sovereignty, and out of grace and love, that Moses and Aaron were raised up to emancipate, deliver, and guide them. It was in sovereignty and in great love that God put darkness between them and the Egyptians, and made the Red Sea to cleave in twain, forming a dry and peaceful promenade for the children of Israel; its waters collapsing and overwhelming all the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh. It was in great love that he made Balak pronounce the blessing which he meant to be a curse; and made the blessing descend where he wished that the curse should lighten. It was out of love that he drove out these nations; made the walls of Jericho

fall to the earth before them, subdued Perizzites, and Hittites, and Hivites. And then the close of it all is, "I have given you a land for which ye did not labour; and therefore in possessing which you ought to have no pride. I have given you cities which you did not build, and in inhabiting which therefore you ought not to glory in man. I have given you vineyards, and oliveyards which you did not plant; and therefore when you eat the fruit and drink the wine thereof you ought to praise Him whose smile has given to their blossoms all their beauty, and whose breath has given to the ripe fruit all its sweetness and its preciousness."

Now therefore, he says, as the result of all this, my advice to you as an aged man, my advice to you resulting from protracted experience in conflict and in peace, from personal and heartfelt experience, is, says the aged Joshua, "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; put away all idols from the midst of the land; and do so by your own free, unconstrained, election; for if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, then you must decide; but you must take the responsibility. And I cannot conceal from you the issue; that the service of Jehovah will bring cloudless sunshine upon your cities, and your vineyards, and your provinces; and that your service of the idols of the heathen will provoke his just and his righteous retribution." And he warns them himself, "I do not wish your blind allegiance; for God is a holy God; and if you to-day profess to belong to him, and to-morrow go and serve the gods of the heathen, it would be better that you had not vowed to serve him." But the people were

steadfast ; and he said, "Ye are witnesses against yourselves ;" and they said, "We are witnesses."

•"So," it is recorded, "Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord:" to be a sort of sacramental memorial of the compact; reminding them of their pledges, of his declarations, and of their duties to their God and to their brethren of mankind.

Then it is said, "Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance." And then this aged warrior died, at the age of 110 ; and was buried in the border of his inheritance, in Timnath-serah. And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua ; but who had witnessed many of the startling phenomena and splendid signs with which God had inaugurated their entrance into Canaan. And the bones of Joseph, referred to in the Pentateuch—those relics that Joseph pledged the people to carry from Egypt, the land of the stranger, into Canaan—they had carried with them all along, and carefully preserved, not worshipped, or made means, imaginary means, of performing miracles ; but kept safely, to be a fulfilment of the promise made to Joseph ; and to be the central spot, as it were, around which the "rude forefathers of the hamlet" should sleep, as they hoped, for generations yet to come.

SABBATH MORNING READINGS

ON THE

Book of Judges.

THE JUDGES.

CHAPTER I.

A GREAT QUESTION. AN ALLIANCE. ADONI-BEZEK.
RETRIBUTION. TEMPORIZING POLICY. THE SPY. THE WOMAN.

BUSH remarks on this Book as follows :—"The book of Judges forms an important link in the history of the Israelites, and is very properly inserted between the books of Joshua and Samuel, as the Judges were the intermediate governors between Joshua and the kings of Israel. It furnishes a lively description of a fluctuating and unsettled people, a striking picture of the disorders and dangers which prevailed in a republic without magistracy, when 'the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways,' when few prophets arose to control the people, and 'every one did that which was right in his own eyes.' It exhibits the contest of true religion with superstition; displays the benefits that flow from the former;

and represents the miseries and evil consequences of impiety ; affording, in fine, a complete verification of the warnings and predictions of Moses, that the children of Israel should be prosperous or unfortunate, according as they obeyed or violated the divine commands. From the scenes of discord and violence which darken this history, Paul has presented us with some illustrious examples of faith, in the instances of Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah ; and Dr. Graves remarks, that ‘ by a superficial reader, the whole period under the Judges may be easily mistaken for an uninterrupted series of idolatries and crimes, from his not observing that the lapses which incurred punishment, and the divine deliverances which attended repentance, are related so fully as to occupy almost the whole narrative ; while long periods, when, under the government of the Judges, the people followed God and the land enjoyed peace, are passed over in a single verse, as productive of no events which required a particular detail.’

“ The whole period is distinguished by a display of extraordinary events, and by the most glaring and miraculous proofs of divine interposition. The history of God’s government must necessarily be characterised by the demonstrations of his immediate agency ; and the selected instruments of his will may well be expected to exhibit a succession of unprecedented exploits. It should, however, be observed that some of the actions here recorded were justifiable only on the supposition of a divine warrant, which superseded all general rules of conduct. Without this, the deeds of Ehud, and of Jael, might be pronounced censurable for their treachery, however commendable the motives

by which they were prompted. In respect, too, to some other incidents, it is obvious that the sacred writer by no means vindicates all that he relates ; and that the indiscriminate massacre of the people of Jabesh-Gilead, and the rape of the virgins at Shiloh, stamped as they are with the evident marks of injustice and cruelty, cannot possibly be justified on the principles which the Scriptures elsewhere furnish. In all such cases, and in the recorded characters of God's ministers in general who are brought before us in this book, we perceive the traces of human infirmity ; and while we discriminate between the lights and shades that mark the picture, it cannot be questionable what parts of their conduct *we* are called to imitate and what to avoid."

We shall find the book on which we have now entered not the least instructive of all the books through which we have already passed. The Judges were not persons seated on the judicial bench for the purpose of distributing law and justice, and punishing offenders, in the sense and manner in which judges act in modern times ; they were rather extraordinary officers, and military leaders, combining the office of a national dictator with that of a judge and civil ruler in the midst of the children of Israel. The government of the people of Israel was a theocracy. They had no visible king, God himself was their immediate civil, as well as spiritual and ecclesiastical, ruler ; and the high-priest was, if we may so speak, his prime minister. These Judges were raised up at a time when no king existed, and who, if he had existed at that time, would have been incapable of executing in special emergencies the grave duties that would have devolved

upon the crown. They were called *Shophetim*; and the book which from this we call Judges is called by the Jews to this day by the initial words. It is very remarkable that the Carthaginians, who were a colony of Tyrians, and retained much of the Hebrew tongue mingled with their own, called their judges by this name. And the Latins, evidently borrowing the Latin word from the original Hebrew, called their judges *Suffetes*.

"They did not," says Kitto, "transmit their dignity to their descendants, neither did they appoint successors. They could not enact laws or impose taxes on the people, though they made peace or war, and in their judicial capacity decided causes without appeal. Yet all this power seems to have been rather the result of character and influence, than of any authority recognised as inherent in the office. No salary or income was attached to it, nor did they receive emoluments of any kind. They had no external marks of distinction; they were surrounded by no circumstances of pomp or ceremony; they had no courtiers, guard, train, or equipage. They were, in general, men of moderate desires, and content to deserve well of their country, without seeking to aggrandize or enrich themselves. They always considered and conducted themselves as specially called of God, relying upon him in all their enterprises, and making it their chief care to bring their countrymen to acknowledge, worship, and obey him. Though evincing in some melancholy instances the infirmities of human nature, yet they were on the whole models of true patriotism and of moral worth, and eminently free from the public crimes, which in all ages have so notoriously flown from the possession and the lust of power."

It is interesting to trace, even through words as channels, the succession of the human race; and to see, even in the distorted traditions of heathendom, the dim reflections and broken images of the original facts contained in this blessed book, and therefore, evidence that the Bible was first.

These Judges occupied a sort of intermediate place between Joshua, the victorious general, who succeeded Moses, and marched the Israelites into the land of Canaan, and left them there; and the kings of Israel, whose biographies are recorded in the books of Samuel. In fact the Judges occupied the transition period, or intermediate space, between Joshua, the military leader, whose word was law; and the kings, who were subsequently given in judgment to the Israelites, and ruled them with the sceptre; the Judges constituting the connecting links, and fulfilling the duties of the general, and the judge, and the king, all in one.

We shall find in this book a most interesting unfolding of the contest between true religion and deadly and destructive error; and also, the fulfilment of the prophecy which Moses gave, by inspiration of God, that the Israelites would prosper in proportion to their piety, and would nationally decline in proportion to their irreligion. We shall also find in this book, as Bush has noted, some of those remarkable characters, who are quoted by the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, as instances of rare and distinguishing faith. There is the history of Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, each a distinct biography, and each in his measure pre-figurative of better things, containing, nevertheless, many practical, personal, and precious lessons for our learning. We shall

find instances of acts and policy which were suffered by God, but not applauded by him. We must not suppose that each act recorded in the Bible has the approbation of God. The Bible is a perfect portrait of what man is, what man is capable of; what God is, and what God has done for him, and still does for his recovery. And therefore many facts found in this book are not stated as precedents, but often as beacons; or merely as historic events without approval or disapproval, locally and specially attached to them.

This chapter begins first of all with the question addressed to God, probably through the high-priest, by the medium of the Urim and Thummim, or the lights and perfections that reflected God's mind from his breast, "Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?" their extermination being always asserted to be the national mission of the Israelites. The answer was given, "Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand." But evidently Judah felt that alone he was not able, or at least he supposed so; and therefore he entered into alliance with another tribe, namely, the tribe of Simeon; and the two distinct tribes, the representatives of two distinct nationalities, formed an alliance against the powerful confederacies of Canaanites which they had to oppose.

A very singular incident occurs here, namely, the treatment of Adoni-bezek, which needs some explanation; the explanation, however, is obvious. In the first place, it was a frequent practice in heathen times, when enemies were taken, to disable them, or render them incapable of carrying arms, as we should say, against those who made them captives, in all time to come.

And as the thumb was the great means of giving impulse to the arrow, or bending the bow, and thus projecting the arrow from it, it followed that to cut off the thumb was to disable a soldier in ancient times from taking his place in the ranks, and opposing with any success the enemies he had to meet. It is very singular, too, that in Eastern countries, though we have no experience of it, the toe is almost as important as the finger; and I am told that in Bengal the toes are called the foot fingers; and that in India nothing is more common than for tailors, weavers, and persons engaged in various textile trades, to make at least as much use of the feet as they do of the fingers.

“The feet and toes,” it is well observed, “are much employed in all the handicraft operations throughout the East, and in many cases the loss of the great toes would completely disqualify a man from earning his subsistence. Besides the many little active operations which they are tutored to execute, the artisans, as they work with their hands, seated on the ground, hold fast and manage all their work with their feet and toes, in which the great toes have a very prominent duty to perform. Ward, in his ‘View of the Hindoos,’ has fully shown to what excellent uses the toes are applied in India. ‘They are second-hand fingers; they are called feet-fingers in Bengalee. In his own house a Hindoo makes use of them to fasten a clog to his feet by means of a button, which slips between the two middle toes. The tailor, if he does not thread his needle, certainly twists his thread with them. The cook holds his knife with his toes while he cuts fish, vegetables, &c. The joiner, the weaver, &c., could

not do without them, and almost every native has twenty different uses for his toes.' ”

We can see, therefore, from this singular fact, that it was a most severe and disabling punishment, with which Adoni-bezek was visited.

But we must notice also, a just reason for his punishment. He himself admits that he had only got what he had inflicted. This cruel tyrant, this barbarous autocrat, had not merely not shrunk from making kings and princes, as noble and as excellent as himself, captives, but had been in the habit of putting them in the place of dogs beneath his table, treating them with a degree of ignominy and contempt, with which he would not treat the very beasts of the earth ; cutting off their limbs and fingers in the way in which he had in just judgment been dealt with himself. And therefore we gather from the whole of this remarkable incident, the transitory nature of all greatness. Here was an autocrat so great that he had seventy captive kings, mutilated in their hands and feet, compelled to crouch like dogs beneath his table, and to take from him what he gave. But his turn comes ; and from the pinnacle of autocratic grandeur we find him sink into a slave as abject and miserable as any one of these. We see here also, judgment overtaking sin even in this life. This man had been guilty of dreadful cruelty, of barbarous inhumanity ; and the judgment of God overtakes him, and he receives the just punishment of his crimes. It clearly appears he was punished not too soon ; for he had long carried on this system of cruelty and barbarism ; inasmuch as he had lived long enough to make captives of seventy kings, and to treat all of them in succession, to the cruelties

which are here said to have been inflicted on them. We notice also, that he was taught to recognise in his punishment God's immediate hand; for this heathen is constrained to own, under the irresistible impression of a righteous and a reigning God, "As I have done, so God hath requiteth me." What looks, therefore, an unnecessary barbarous incident, is really the nucleus of very precious and important lessons, from which all may learn this lesson, that "Except we repent, we shall all likewise perish."

The chapter proceeds after this to state, Jerusalem was taken, next Hebron, and next Hormah, and Gaza, and Askelon. It is necessary to notice here how it is frequently repeated that the Israelites suffered the Canaanites to remain. The command of God was to extirpate them; the Canaanites had been guilty of great crimes; and Adoni-bezek was but a most remarkable criminal in the midst of them; the whole race was ordered to be exterminated; but many of the Israelites, instead of obeying God's will, and accepting his law as duty, gave way to a temporising expediency, and suffered many of the Canaanites to remain in the cities that they themselves took possession of. Now the consequence of this very course was the judgments that were distinctly predicted; that by departing from God's clear commandments, and giving way to their own ideas of expediency, they should reap bitter and lasting consequences. They nevertheless did so; marriages were formed with the Canaanites; traffic reciprocated, commercial intercourse carried on, hospitalities exchanged, and the result was, that many of God's people became as degenerate and debased as the heathen, till at last

judgments fell upon them almost as consuming as fell upon the Canaanites.

We read of the history here of a spy who gave them the information they required, and this on the condition that they would show him pity, and spare him, and let him go. But this man was evidently a base and a guilty traitor. The case of Rahab, of whom we read in the previous book, was very different. She saw God's mind, recognised the spies as God's messengers, acted under the fear of God, and threw in her lot with the people of God. But this man was an unmitigated traitor; he betrayed the city he belonged to, and in no sense under a divine impulse, and instead of identifying himself with the Israelites to whom he had betrayed it, it is said that "he went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz." So that the same facts recorded of this man and of Rahab have very different import, when we regard the concomitant circumstances in which they are set. This ought always to be attended to in our judgments.

We read next of the petition addressed by the woman to the king, that he would give her the upper springs and the nether springs; that is, the means of fertility to the land which had been given to her, without which the palm-tree would not grow, or the means of nutriment be found.

The whole of the remainder of the chapter consists very much of an account of the Israelites refusing, from their own ideas of expediency, to carry out the express command of their God; and in the sequel of this book we shall see how bitter and disastrous were the consequences of such unfaithfulness to clear and indubi-

table obligation. What God enjoins is not only duty, but it will be found in its ultimate results to be the highest and most extensive mercy. Man is not only not wiser than God, but he is also not so merciful. No supposed humanity on our part ought for one moment to lessen the force, or disannul the obligation, of God's law. It is our duty to do with all our might what God imposes as obligation, and leave Him to take care of mercy, and beneficence, and goodness. His will is our greatest happiness.

THE ANGEL OF GOD.

CHAPTER II.

DESTRUCTION OF CANAANITES. SACRIFICE AND REPENTANCE.
A NEW GENERATION. DISOBEDIENT APOSTATE. PUNISH-
MENT. GOD DESCRIBED IN HUMAN FIGURES. MERCY IN
JUDGMENT. CANAANITES LEFT AS THORNS.

THE chapter begins by an account of an angel of the Lord coming up from Gilgal, and speaking to the children of Israel. It is impossible, I think, from the language used by this being, to understand that he was no more than a created angel sent from God. His words are, "I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you." All these expressions belong to, and are predicable only of, God. It was he that made the covenant; it was he that swore unto their fathers; it was he that brought them out from the land of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm. This angel either assumes too much for a creature, or he must be some one far superior to a creature. When we look into the original, we find that the word is not literally "Angel of the Lord," but *Melek Yehovah*, literally translated, "Angel or Messenger Jehovah." And when we remember that this angel constantly appears, speaks, and is spoken

of throughout Genesis, and especially in Exodus, we at once conclude that he was none else than the second Person in the blessed and glorious Trinity, the Great Messenger of the Covenant, the Messiah, the Shiloh, literally the Sent One, who appeared to his people in ancient times, guided them through the desert by the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day, and with an outstretched arm and a mighty hand delivered them from the midst of their enemies. It is true we do not know in what form he appeared; this only we know, he did appear visibly, he did speak audibly; and Israel listened to and obeyed his words as the very words of Deity himself.

“As the word ‘angel,’ in its primary import, is a term of office equivalent to *messenger*, the Jews for the most part are of the opinion that it here denotes *a prophet* sent by God as a messenger, and that messenger they suppose to have been Phinehas, the high-priest, who was commissioned on this occasion to deliver the ensuing solemn reproof to Israel. This is indeed possible, but the more probable opinion we take to be, that it was neither a human prophet nor a created angel, but the Son of God himself, he who is so frequently styled, in the Scriptures, the ‘Angel of the Covenant.’ The evidence of this is found in what he immediately goes on to say of himself, ‘I made you to go up out of Egypt,’ &c. Who but Jehovah himself could or would adopt such language as this? It was not a creature that brought the Israelites out of Egypt, but Jehovah. It was not a creature that made a covenant with them, but Jehovah. It was not a creature to whom they were accountable for their disobedience, and whose displeasure they had so

much reason to dread, but Jehovah. As to the circumstance of his being said to 'come up' from Gilgal, which is supposed to militate against this interpretation, it rather confirms it; for it was in Gilgal, near to Jericho, that this same divine person had appeared to Joshua as an armed warrior. That *he* was Jehovah cannot be doubted, because he suffered Joshua to worship him."

When this angel spoke to these Israelites, he told them that because of their sins he would not drive out the Canaanites from before them. We must bear in mind what we read in the last chapter, that though Israel was instructed to exterminate the Canaanites, from reasons of expediency they spared them. This undeniable command has been frequently objected to as cruel and unworthy of God. Why exterminate a whole people? The simple answer is, why put to death a murderer or other great criminal? It was not private or national hate, but the infliction of a judicial sentence pronounced by the Judge of all the earth; and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? All that Joshua and the Israelites had to do was to execute the command of heaven; and there was no cruelty in executing that command, but there was sin and disobedience in refusing to do so; it was also the highest inexpediency to refuse, for thereby they sowed the seeds of internecine war, civil disturbance, and endless national and social miseries, which they felt and bitterly deplored, even to the end of their national history in Canaan. We may rest assured that whatever our own judgment may be about a command of God, the way of duty and obedience is in that instance the way of safety; and the highest

expediency will always be found to follow the acceptance of the truest principle.

When the Israelites heard this, some of the remnants of the generation that had witnessed all these things, these omissions of duty and disloyalty to God, wept, and were exceedingly distressed, and, it is added, "they sacrificed there unto the Lord." They not only repented, but they offered up sacrifices; that is, they did not trust to their tears, as if they could wash away their sins; but to that atonement that should be made in the fulness of the times; and of which the sacrifices they offered were mere types and foreshadows.

"They had recourse to the blood of sprinkling for the remission of their sin. Though their weeping was very general and very bitter, so much so as to give a name to the place, yet they did not hope to pacify their offended God with tears. They knew that an atonement was necessary, and they therefore sought him in his appointed way. Would that *we* might learn from them! Humiliation is *necessary*, but not *sufficient*. Tears, even if they were to flow in rivers, could never wash away sin. The blood of atonement is indispensable, without which there is no remission. Nor should the fact be lost sight of here, that the sin laid to the charge of Israel was not of *commission*, but of *omission*; not some flagrant enormity, but a lukewarmness and neglect of duty. Yet they saw their need of a sacrifice to atone for *that*. In like manner, though we should have no guilt imputed to us but that of omission and defect, yet must we apply to the blood of sprinkling, and seek for pardon through that one sacrifice offered for us upon the cross."

"When Joshua had let the people go, the children

of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua." But then, after Joshua's death, a new generation sprang up, and "they knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." The word "know," in Scripture, means, "to approve." For instance, in the first Psalm, "the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous," that is, approveth of it. And so it is said, that after the death of Joseph there arose a ruler in Egypt that knew not Joseph; that is, did not approve of his principles, his conduct, and his policy. So here a generation sprang up that knew not the Lord; that is, they disobeyed him, they refused to comply with his prescriptions, and disregarded all that he had done for them in the past. They treated the history of the past as an old almanac, to be cast away as utterly inapplicable in date to their enlightened and present years, instead of regarding the history of the past as simply a prophecy of the history of the future; and drawing from it those maxims, duties, obligations, warnings, with which all history is more or less pregnant. And they forsook the Lord in consequence, and served Baal. It is said therefore, "The anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of the spoilers." Those phrases that frequently occur in the Bible, "The anger of the Lord was hot," "The Lord repented," and "It grieved him," are human expressions applied to divine feelings. It is, in other words, describing God in the language of humanity. We have nothing but an imperfect instrument called human speech, which is constructed for human beings, and descriptive

of human passions, and wants, and acts, and ways; and with that speech, even inspired penmen must delineate and make known what God is and feels towards us. It never can be true in the rigid and human aspect of the word, that God repents. We read in one passage that he did repent, but then we find it recorded in another passage, "He is not a man, that he should repent." Do not these things seem contradictory? They are not so really. God repents not in the sense of thinking that he had done wrong, and altering his course, as we do; but in the sense of changing his policy, or his mode of treatment of those who are the subjects of his government; so that he pursues a course it may be the very opposite of that which he pursued before, seeking, however, to accomplish the same result, and sustained by the same great and everlasting principles.

We find, however, after this, that God, instead of casting them away utterly and for ever, raised up Judges to deliver them. Their sins plunged them into perils, God's mercy provided for them deliverance. We have already seen that the Judges here spoken of were not to be understood as being officially what we mean by judges. We have seen they were dictators, special persons raised up in emergencies in order to achieve special deliverances; and filling up the gap between Joshua, the last military leader of Israel, and the kings, whose history is recorded in the sequel of this book and those that follow.

But God said in the end of this chapter, that nevertheless he would not expel the Canaanites, as the Israelites had failed to do so; and that they should be left to try them as thorns in their sides. It is a very re-

markable fact, that a nation's sins are generally turned into the scourges with which that nation is punished. We find in reading God's holy records that the sins of Israel were seized by God and made the instruments of the punishment of Israel. All sin seems to have in it punishment analogous to itself. National sin, whatever it may be, has national retribution; and the retribution lies very much in the direction of the sin, so that when a nation suffers, it should look back and look within, and see along the line of its suffering, what its sin may have been, and it will find in its past sin the solution of its present suffering. It is a law, immutable as the throne of God, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the ruin of any people."

"20. *And the anger of the Lord was kindled, &c.* From this verse to the end of the chapter, the narrative is probably to be considered merely as a repetition in substance of what is affirmed by the Angel, ver. 1—3. It is a more full and detailed statement of the *reasons* for the foregoing appearance of the divine messenger, threatening them with the judgments of heaven for their disobedience. Nothing is more common than such transpositions in the order of the inspired record. The *effect* is first mentioned, and the *cause* afterwards.

"21. *Will not henceforth drive out, &c.* I will not while you continue in your stubborn way. The promises of God to expel the Canaanites were upon condition of their obedience.

"22. *That through them I may prove Israel.* Not for his own satisfaction, but that they themselves might be made better acquainted with the plague of their own hearts, and that the righteous judgments of God

might thus approve themselves to the consciences of all who should ever experience, or witness, or hear of them. The Most High often orders his providence on the principle of a father or master who distrusts the fidelity of his son or servant, and places them in such circumstances that they may, by their good or evil conduct, justify his suspicions, or give him proofs of their being groundless. It is implied, however, that these nations, in case the Israelites stood not the test, should be not only *trials* or *ordeals* to them, but also *scourges* and *instruments of wrath*.—¶ *As their fathers did keep it.* That is, those who lived in the days of Joshua, and the elders who overlived him.

“23, *Therefore the Lord left, &c.*, or, Hebrew, ‘suffered.’ It is not to be understood that there was any *absolute necessity* for this delay in expelling the Canaanites, but as God *foresaw* the remissness of his people in accomplishing this work, he saw fit in his providence to *overrule* it to a wise and useful result. In like manner he overrules the wickedness of all the wicked in the universe, and causes it to redound to the good of the whole and his own glory, in the view of all intelligent creatures.”

Let us not be supine in prosecuting our Christian warfare. Let us take to us the whole armour of God—fight the good fight, and quit ourselves like men, for we war not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. We occupy, as soldiers of the Lord Jesus, a very responsible, and often a very perilous position. We have evil appetites, and passions, and desires, not wholly extirpated in this present life, which rise at times in almost supernatural force, and strive for

supremacy. We are also surrounded with formidable foes, unseen and seen, and in our own strength we can neither stand nor gain the victory. We must fall back on, and plead what is really promised—"My grace is sufficient for you;" and "My strength is made perfect in weakness." We are never so strong as when most conscious of our weakness; or so sure of success as when we look up to and lean on the omnipotence of God.

RECAPITULATION.

CHAPTER III.

GOD'S COMMANDS SOMETIMES PERMISSIVE. "KNOW" USED FOR
"MAKE KNOWN." MIXED MARRIAGES. PRINCIPLE THE
BASIS OF SUCCESS. GOD'S ANGER AND MERCY. EHUD. THE
TYRANT.

It is almost essential to recapitulate the facts already stated in the opening chapters of this book ; and to remind you that the Judges were not what we call judges, persons seated on the judgment-seat to determine questions of right and wrong ; but extraordinary officers, something like the Roman dictators of old, armed with absolute power either to determine right and wrong, or to lead the armies to the battle, or to govern the children of Israel, according to the laws and institutions God had laid down. I stated that the last ruler, Joshua, disappeared from the people ; that between him, the military ruler, and the kings that came to be established after, were the Judges, who occupied the intermediate place, armed with temporary dictatorial power to defend, protect, and maintain peace amidst the children of Israel.

We must not fail to recollect also the strict command of God to the Israelites, as his executive, for that was their position, to exterminate without sparing all the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Amo-

rites, and all the people that inhabited that land, which was now to be theirs for a perpetual possession. The Israelites, actuated it may be by some feelings of humanity, or by political, selfish, and social motives, did not carry out the commandment of God, but spared the Canaanites, dwelt amongst them, saw as they thought much to admire in them, and in their daughters, persons that they desired to have as their wives, and some of them they married; and they saw in the Canaanites and the Philistines themselves, social, good sort of men, not, as they began to think, so wicked as they had been described; and, therefore, instead of carrying out the awful, but the most righteous command of God, to exterminate the people who had been guilty of the greatest crimes, and whose extermination was not private cruelty, but public and judicial retribution, they formed near and intimate alliances with them; but as long as they were in Palestine, they had reason to regret and deplore what the world might construe as humanity, but what God had pronounced to be unfaithfulness and undutifulness to himself. “Evidently it is implied that, contrary to the command of God, they suffered these nations to remain a majority in point of numbers, as otherwise they could not properly be said to dwell *among them*.

“*Took their daughters—and served their gods.* Chaldaic, ‘worshipped their errors (idols).’ The cause and the effect brought into immediate connexion, in exact accordance with what had been long before announced, Deut. vii. 3, 4, ‘Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled,' &c. 'In such unequal matches there is more reason to fear that the bad will corrupt the good, than to hope the good will reform the bad.'"
—*Henry.*

This chapter records the fact, that these nations were left to prove Israel. God did not leave them as thorns, it was Israel that did so. But God took the sin of which his people had been guilty, and made that sin the scourge with which they were subsequently punished. This is the great law which we can trace in reading the history of the world, as already hinted, that a nation's sins always become, sooner or later, a nation's punishment. Nations are dealt with as having an existence only in time; and you can trace, in almost every instance, the ties and links that connect the special sufferings of a nation with the special sins of which that nation has been guilty. You will find in this chapter that God is said to do things which he only permits; it is said, for instance, "He hardened Pharaoh's heart;" we know that this means he permitted it to be so. So here, "The Lord left the Canaanites to prove Israel;" he permitted them to be left; but it was the Israelites that did not do their duty in exterminating them; and God then seized the sin which they had committed, and made the sin the executor of his righteous retribution against a sinful and a guilty people. And these people were left, it is said, "that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof." "They were to prove Israel, to

know"—that is, to make known. The word "to know," in Scripture, is sometimes used in the sense of making known; and it has been thought by some able critics, that that phrase, which has occasioned difficulty in the minds of readers, but which, I think, in either light, need occasion none; "Of that day and hour knoweth no man; not the angels in heaven, no, not the Son," is equivalent to, "no man maketh known."

Many people have said, How could Christ as God be ignorant of the day? Well, the same difficulty occurs, How could Christ be omnipotent, and yet limited in power? How could he be omnipresent, and yet not present here and also there? How could he be God, and yet man? The Bible says that he was both. But some critics have argued, that the Greek word rendered "know," is used in the same sense as the analogous Greek word "to make known," or in the same sense in which the Hebrew word is used; and in that sense it would read thus—"That day no man is commissioned to make known; no, not the angels of God, not even the Son of God himself." At all events, we have the evidence that the word is used in the sense of making known; and one proof is found in the fourth verse of this very chapter; "They were to prove Israel, to know"—that is, to make known—"whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses."

We next read, that the children of Israel took the daughters of the Philistines for their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods: instead of standing aloof a peculiar people, to whom

was committed a peculiar mission, the national glory of preserving intact the oracles of God, and defending the cause and the claims of truth, they amalgamated with the world, or as we should translate it into modern phrase, the church came down to the world, and the world accepted the overtures of the church, and the result was then—what the result is invariably now—not that the world became more Christian, but that the church became more worldly. It is a great law, that when a true Christian forms associations which he knows to be wrong with one who is not a Christian, the result is rarely that the person who is not a Christian becomes one, but that the Christian, at least, who is thought and who professed to be so, becomes more worldly. That has been the almost universal law; thereby teaching us that the right way is always to pursue what is obviously the path of duty, principle, Scripture precedent, and holy law; and then all the rest will turn out just as we could desire. It is a most important thought that principle is always expediency; expediency is not always principle; that duty is in the long run success; and that momentary obscurity only leads to and evolves ultimate and more brilliant glory.

“Therefore,” it is said, “the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel;” and yet, strange dealing! what mingling of sunshine and cloud, of mercy and of judgment; while God’s anger is kindled against them for their sins, that very same God raises up judges or deliverers to protect and defend them. And, therefore, “The Spirit of the Lord came upon Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother;” and he fought against the king of Mesopotamia. The country was called

Mesopotamia from two Greek words, signifying between, or in the midst of its rivers, because it was a strip of land situated between the Tigris and the Euphrates; the two rivers mingling together before they discharged their waters into the ocean; and the tract of land in the middle was called Mesopotamia. Then the land, it is said, had rest forty years.

After this, when the children of Israel again fell into sin, God raised up for them another deliverer, Ehud. Now, there is a great deal in the conduct of this man that seems to us inexplicable. It is strange that he should go into the presence of a king who was the oppressor of the children of Israel, a Canaanite, one that should have been, with all the race, extirpated, but with whom they had now entered into terms of amity and peace; an old, indolent, luxurious monarch, who oppressed the children of Israel; and still more, that he should have gone on the pretext put forth by him that he had a message for him, in these words: "I have a message from God unto thee;" a most solemn and important message, if it were what he said. It also seems strange that he desired to be alone, and to communicate with him alone; it seems most treacherous to take a dagger, and stab him to the heart, and take away his life, and coolly lock the door upon him, and go out, and retire, leaving there weltering in his blood the man into whose presence he had been admitted as an act of kindness, and of hospitality and welcome. The explanation here of "covering his feet in the summer chamber," is this; when the Easterns lie down in the heat of the day upon a sofa, or a carpet, or couch, to rest, they take their slippers from their feet, and the servant comes in and lays a

piece of carpet on the feet, in order to keep them warm whilst the party lies asleep.

The chamber into which he went when he wished to be retired is thus explained: "The circumstance is probably mentioned by way of accounting for his servants' waiting so long (ver. 23) before going into him. From a circumstance mentioned by Mr. Bruce, it appears that Ehud acted in strict conformity to the customs of the time and place, so that neither the suspicion of the king nor his attendants should be excited by his conduct. It was usual for the attendants to retire when secret messages were to be delivered. 'I drank a dish of coffee,' says he, 'and told him, that I was a bearer of a confidential message from Ali Bey of Cairo, and wished to deliver it to him without witnesses, whenever he pleased. The room was accordingly cleared without delay, excepting his secretary, who was also going away, when I pulled him back by the clothes, saying, Stay, if you please; we shall need you to write the answer.' The extreme heat of the climate obliged the Orientals to adopt various devices for ventilating and cooling their apartments. For this purpose they made their doors large, and their chambers spacious; but they soon found that such simple contrivances were insufficient, and that other methods of cooling their habitations were necessary. At Aleppo, according to Russel, this was effected by means of kiosks, which are a sort of wooden divans or stages, which project a little way from their other buildings, and hang over the street. They are raised about a foot and a half higher than the floor of the room, to which they are quite open, and by having windows in front and on each side, a great draught of air is produced,

causing a refreshing coolness in the sultry heat of summer. Another method of compassing the same end is by ventilators. The houses in Persia are ventilated by means of a triangular building which rises far above the terrace roof, and is open at top, so as to receive the wind in whatever direction it blows."

He was in one of those chambers, it would thus appear, which are connected with Eastern houses, cooled by artificial means in the midst of the heat and sultriness of the summer; and Ehud, knowing this, came in and assassinated him.

Now, the question for us to answer is here suggested: Is this a precedent for a subject to rise up and destroy his sovereign, who may be a cruel and oppressive tyrant? I answer, Unquestionably, no. No private man has a right to take the law into his own hands, much less to quote this as a precedent for insubordination, and such insubordination as is here specified, against constituted authority. If it be no precedent for us, and if the thing would be wrong in us, how could it be right in Ehud? The only answer I can give is that the Lord raised him up for a deliverer; and that he may have done this deed under a special inspiration from on high, and so executing what was justice and judgment upon a depraved, guilty, tyrannical Canaanite monarch. This he was commissioned to do in a special case, under a special inspiration, under circumstances so special that they can scarcely ever occur again; and hence there is no precedent for us. It may, therefore, be justified by the consideration that Ehud was simply the executioner of God's command, putting to death one guilty of great crimes; his act in no respect a

precedent, unless we can show by unequivocal evidence that there are similar circumstances, and that God, by a voice from heaven, has audibly commissioned us to do what Ehud did.

In verse 31, we read that Shamgar slew 600 Philistines with an ox-goad. Bush observes on this,—“The Septuagint and Vulgate render the original by, *a coulter* or *ploughshare*, but that the ox-goad still used in Palestine is a weapon sufficiently destructive for this purpose, if wielded by a strong and skilful hand, appears highly probable from the description of this implement given by Maundrell. He says, ‘the country people were now everywhere at plough in the fields, in order to sow cotton. It was observable, that in ploughing they used goads of extraordinary size ; upon measuring of several, I found them eight feet long, and at the bigger end six inches in circumference. They were armed at the lesser end with a sharp prickle for driving the oxen, at the other end with a small spade, or paddle of iron, strong and massy, for cleansing the plough from the clay that encumbers it in working. May we not from hence conjecture, that it was with such a goad as one of these, that Shamgar made that prodigious slaughter related of him, Judges iii. 31? I am confident that whoever should see one of these instruments, would judge it to be a weapon not less fit, perhaps fitter, than a sword for such an execution. Goads of this sort I saw always used hereabouts, and also in Syria ; and the reason is, because the same single person both drives the oxen, and also holds and manages the plough ; which makes it necessary to use such a goad as is above described, to avoid the incumbrance of two instruments.’ This is confirmed

by Mr. Buckingham, who, in describing his journey from Soor (Tyre) to Acre, remarks of the ploughing that he witnessed, that 'oxen were yoked in pairs, and the plough was small and of simple construction, so that it seemed necessary for two to follow each other in the same furrow, as they invariably did.' "

"I have a message to thee," is not perverted by its application to every man who professes to hear what God says. In other words, it is a Divine word to man, and the minister of Christ is the mere organ of its utterance.

First, it is a message of love. "God is love;" and the gospel is the declaration of it, and the definition of the channel in which it flows. Love is God's last process for the restoration of men. Where it is deeply felt, it awakens responsive love, and we love Him because He first loved us.

Secondly, it is a message of peace. Its object, subject, and source, is the Prince of Peace. Its tendency is to spread over heaven and earth an atmosphere of peace: the heart at peace with God comes to be at peace with itself and with all creation. Creation groans under its present heavy burdens, and sighs and cries for peace.

This message is adapted to man's ignorance, and removes it; to man's misery, and ends it; to man's griefs, and dilutes them; to man's fears, and scatters them. It proclaims a Saviour for the worst and the oldest; a Sanctifier for every heart that receives it; a rest in Christ here, and a home with Christ hereafter.

But this message is for "to-day." To-day if ye will hear his voice; we may not hear another call, or see another day, or receive another revelation. Or our

hearts may be hardened, conscience dead, or opportunities gone. God may cease to call; or the Great Master may say, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" It is to those who hesitate, that these awful words may be addressed, "Because I have called, and ye refused, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your feath cometh." The vast importance of the soul—the fact that its destiny depends on the character it receives now—the uncertainty and nearness of eternity—all we value on earth, and would desire beyond it, plead with us earnestly and prayerfully to weigh the solemn message, and to receive and welcome, and turn it into daily life; to hear it is our dignity, our safety, our happiness. May it be our joyful experience here, and happy reflection hereafter!

"God who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us."

These words are the explanation of the message. The author of it is "God." The origin of it is his "rich mercy," the motive of it, the "great love wherewith he loved us." Our state by nature is "dead in sin." Its action on our hearts is, "hath quickened us together with Christ." Its exaltation of us is, "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." Its glorious and everlasting result and object is, "that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Jesus Christ."

This glorious message, like an inverted rainbow, begins in heaven, descends to earth, transforming every living man it touches, and ascends to heaven, where it is merged in the glory out of which it came. The whole of the New Testament consists of explanations or illustrations of this precious message. Angels once preached it on the plains of Bethlehem; saints in glory sing it in the New Jerusalem. Its glad accents shall one day be heard in the chimes of the sea, in the whispers of the winds, in the tongues of all nations, in the songs of all lands, from the pine forests of the north to the palm groves of the east.

NATIONAL RETRIBUTION.

CHAPTER IV.

DEBORAH, OR THE BEE. BARAK SENT FOR. ISRAELITES HAD SPARED CANAAN. CONSEQUENCES. IRON CHARIOTS. BARAK REQUIRES DEBORAH TO GO UP TO BATTLE WITH HER. Jael AND SISERA.

BISHOP HALL very justly remarks—"What a continued circle is here of sins, judgments, repentance, deliverance! The conversation with idolaters taints them with sin, their sin draws on judgment, the smart of the judgment moves them to repentance, on their repentance follows speedy deliverance, on their peace and deliverance they sin again! Who would not think idolatry an absurd and unnatural thing? which as it hath the fewest inducements, so hath it also the most direct prohibitions from God; and yet after all their warnings, Israel falls into it again. Neither affliction nor repentance can secure an Israelite from redoubling his worst sin, if he be left to his own frailty."

We have it stated in the chapter now read, that Israel, as a nation, proved untrue to its great privileges and blessings, and committed grievous national crimes against the Lord God of Israel. The consequence was, what it ever has been, and ever will be, while God is the Governor of the earth, that nations which sin are punished. It is a law as fixed as

gravitation, or any of what are called the laws of the natural world, that righteousness exalteth a nation, but that sin is the ruin of any people. Israel had often felt the effects of the lesson; but, alas! they had not practically learnt it.

At this time, however, God interposed in answer to their cry; pitying their sufferings, of which not he but their sin was the author; and as he had always done in the past, so he did now—he raised up a special deliverer as judge; and strange to say, not a man, as before, but a woman. He can deliver by few or by many; he can raise the instruments where they are least likely to be found, and make a Deborah the means of salvation to the land, when some of the great captains of the day either were unwilling or unable to be so.

Deborah is here spoken of as a prophetess, and the wife of Lapidoth, and one who judged Israel. Deborah means, in the Hebrew, literally “a bee;” the same as the Greek word and name Melissa, “a bee.” What was the origin of the name, or why she was called so, I do not know. We merely find her history as a prophetess, a judge of Israel, and the wife of Lapidoth. “And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah;” that is, the name by which it was known when this book was written; called the palm-tree of Deborah, because she dwelt under its shadow or contiguous to it. At this time, under the special inspiration of God, she sent for Barak, the son of Abinoam, and told him to go and gather his troops, or all that were willing, toward Mount Tabor—a very magnificent mountain, some 2,000 feet high, shaped like a cone, with the point or

the pinnacle of it cut off—to the number of ten thousand men.

“ *Go and draw toward Mount Tabor.* The true sense of the term ‘draw,’ in this connexion, is a point much debated by commentators. According to the rendering in our common translation, it would naturally be taken as a command to *approach toward* Mount Tabor; but this evidently is incorrect, as the verb in the original never has this meaning, and the exact rendering of the preposition is *in* or *upon* Mount Tabor, instead of *toward*. A nearer approximation to the sense of the Hebrew must be attempted, and here, as in other cases of doubtful interpretation, the *prevailing usage* (*usus loquendi*) of the sacred writers in regard to the word in question, must afford the clue to our inquiries. That its primary import is *to draw, to draw out*, and thence, in some cases, *to prolong, to protract*, as the sound of a trumpet in blowing, is universally conceded. Indeed, Le Clerc, Schmid, and others, on the ground of its being applied to the *long-drawn* sound of a trumpet, (Exod. xvii. 13, Josh. vi. 5,) propose to supply the original word for trumpet, and to take it as a command to Barak to go and *blow the trumpet* on Mount Tabor, as a signal for the gathering of the tribes, as Ehud did upon Mount Ephraim. Gesenius and Winer, in their lexicons, understand it of *drawing out* or *asunder* a military force, *i. e.*, intrans. *extending, expanding, spreading themselves out*. A preferable sense we think to be that of *drawing, drafting, or enlisting*, not perhaps by compulsion, but by argument and persuasion; not so much to raise an army of *conscripts*, as a band of *volunteers*; as will be easily inferred from the tenor of Deborah’s song in the

ensuing chapter, which is in part a reproof to several of the tribes for not *offering themselves willingly* on this perilous emergency. How much support this rendering receives from parallel usage will be seen from the following citations:—Cant. i. 4, ‘*Draw me, we will run after thee;*’ *i. e.* secretly but powerfully constrain me. Jer. xxxi. 3, ‘*I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.*’ Hos. xi. 4, ‘*I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love;*’ *i. e.* by the power of moral suasion, by arguments and motives suited to their rational natures. In like manner, we suppose Barak was ordered to go and use his utmost endeavours to stir up the minds of his countrymen, and as a popular advocate of any cause *draws* partisans after him, so he was to prevail upon as many as possible to engage with him in the proposed enterprise. When arrived at the summit of Tabor, the traveller is astonished to find an oval of half a mile in extent, commanding the finest view anywhere to be obtained in the whole compass of Palestine. On this plain, at the east end, is a mass of ruins, apparently the remains of churches, towers, strong walls, and fortifications, all bearing the traces of having been erected in a very remote antiquity. Several grottos and cisterns are also pointed out. ‘From its top,’ says Maundrell, ‘you have a prospect which, if nothing else, will reward the labour of ascending it. It is impossible for man’s eyes to have a higher gratification of this nature. On the north-west you discern, at a distance, the Mediterranean, and all round you have the spacious and beautiful plains of Esdraelon and Galilee. Turning a little southward you have in view the high

mountains of Gilboa, fatal to Saul and his sons. Due east you discern the sea of Tiberias, distant about one day's journey.' "

And God said to her, what she repeated, "And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand." You must never forget, what I called your attention to before, that the command of God to the children of Israel was completely to clear Canaan of all its inhabitants. I showed that the reason of this command was not arbitrary anti-social cruelty; but a judicial act or just judgment inflicted upon a polluted, guilty, and criminal race. The Israelites, instead of fulfilling God's command, thought they would indulge their own compassion, and spared where they ought to have exterminated in obedience to God's law. Never forget that duty is not only the highest expediency, but always the highest compassion. Wherever you can see clear duty, there you may be sure, whether you can anticipate the issues or not, that the result of a clear, firm, unswerving adhesion to its demands will in the long run be the greatest kindness to mankind as well as the highest expediency in obtaining your ultimate result. The Israelites, however, thought that their own ideas were much more expedient than God's commandments, and therefore they spared where they ought not; and the consequence was, that instead of having a land in perfect peace, depopulated of its criminal inhabitants, they suffered those criminal inhabitants to remain; and thereby was kept up a sort of chronic war, a ceaseless internecine quarrelling with the Canaanites,

and also a growing copying their manners, conforming to their wicked habits, and lastly, going to war with them. The worst scenes recorded in this book, so distressing and so bitter, were the results of one primal act, which seemed compassion, but which was really in the long run the greatest cruelty.

At this time, therefore, the war broke out between them and Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, or as it ought to be properly pronounced, Yabin's. I have already noticed before, that those names beginning with J, that sound some of them so harsh, are in the original extremely musical. Jehovah, is a harsh sounding word; but the word Yehovah, is not, and like most of those words that begin with J, ought to be pronounced with a Y, as they begin with what answers to Y, in the Hebrew tongue.

Barak was evidently a little faint-hearted, and for the very simple reason that the king of Jabin and Sisera his captain were exceedingly well prepared to receive his opponents, being armed with what were very formidable weapons in those ancient times—chariots of iron, not formed of iron, but each axle having, external to the wheel, a sort of scythe fastened, and on each shaft of the chariot, where the harness or the collar of the horse was, another iron scythe; and one can conceive what a very formidable weapon that must have been. It must have been destruction to drive horses with their charioteers and such chariots, at full speed, into compact masses of troops or other solid bodies of men before they were prepared to receive, or resist, or avoid. There must have been havoc worse than any inflicted by instruments of modern warfare. Sisera had ten thousand men at his

feet, that is, at his command. After Barak had learned all this, and had been ordered to go against him, he hesitated; did not think it expedient, or did not see his way, or did not suppose he had men brave enough or numerous enough to fight. He addresses Deborah—"If you will go with me, then I will go: but if not, then I will not go." Well, she said, "I will go with you; but then recollect you will lose half the credit of the journey. If you had gone at once, because duty bade you, you would have got all the glory; but as you are shrinking, and need my aid, I will go, for the safety of God's people; but then it will be at the sacrifice of your own renown for a great victory, which you are sure to obtain; and the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman;" not Deborah the woman, but into the hand of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, as we shall afterwards read.

Well, then, "Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him." We then read that Heber had separated from the Kenites, and had pitched his tent in the plain of Zaanaim; where, according to the division of the tribes, he ought not to be. Deborah gave Barak the word: "Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand. So Barak went down from Mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his hosts, with the edge of the sword, before Barak;" and Sisera, who had ridden in triumph in his chariot, expecting to witness the utter discomfiture of the children of Israel, being defeated, was

obliged to leave his chariot that he might not be known, and to escape the best way he could, on foot, in order to find shelter, protection, and a refuge. We read that Barak had the courage to pursue after the chariots and the host; and the consequence was that all Sisera's troops were cut down to a man. But Sisera himself fled; and found the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. "And when he had turned in unto the tent, she covered him with a mantle. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink." Now the explanation of all this is very obvious; whether she knew, being one of the children of Israel, that he was Sisera, the great captain of the enemies of her country, it is difficult to say; but this we know, from the habits of the modern Arabs, that the moment a stranger comes to an Arab tent, and is admitted into it, and especially is allowed to taste milk, or bread, or whatever they have to give him, the most solemn reciprocal duties are instantly created; and that man's safety will be secured even at the risk of the life of the proprietor and inmate of that tent. So that when he came a refugee to her tent, and she gave him, as being the head of the house in the absence of her husband, admission and shelter, she did what was most dutiful, and was the usual custom of the country. It would seem from the statement here, that she admitted him into what was called, in ancient times, the harem of the tent; that is, the women's compartment of the tent; where the protection was special, and into which no rude hand might intrude, and no avenger in pursuit might come. When

thus admitted into her tent, sheltered and protected, and entitled to protection, he fell asleep, as if in conscious security; he expected no danger, or at all events, that she who had thus entertained him would be the very last to do him any injury.

"17. *To the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite.* That is, probably, to Jael's apartment of the tent, the harem, the women's quarters. We must consider these Kenites as Arabs, and estimate their proceedings accordingly. Sisera's claim on Jael, in the absence of Heber, was perfectly proper. When a stranger comes to an Arab camp, where he has no acquaintance, he proceeds to the first tent, and if the proprietor is absent, his wife and daughters are not only authorized, but required, to perform the duties of hospitality to him. As a character for liberal hospitality is an actual distinction of an Arab, no one can with honour repel from the tent a stranger who claims hospitality, nor, in ordinary circumstances, does any one desire to do so; on the contrary, there is rather a disposition to contend who shall enjoy the privilege of granting him entertainment. In the present instance, Sisera's application to the tent of the Sheikh, whose privilege it more especially was to entertain strangers, was in the common course of things. As belonging to a friendly people, Sisera's claim for protection was as valid as a common claim for hospitality, and could not be refused. Having once promised protection to a person, and admitted him to his tent, the Arab is bound, not only to conceal his guest, but to defend him, even with his life, from his pursuers; and if his tent should be forced, and his guest slain there, it is his duty to become the

avenger of his blood. On these sentiments of honour Sisera seems to have relied ; particularly after Jael had supplied him with refreshments, which, in the highest sense, are regarded as a seal to the covenant of peace and safety : and in fact, after all this an Arab would be bound to protect with his own life even his bitterest enemy, to whom he may inadvertently have granted his protection. It is probable, that Jael introduced Sisera for safety into the inner or women's part of the tent. This she might do without impropriety, although it would be the most grievous insult for any man to intrude there without permission. Sisera appears to have felt quite certain that the pursuers would not dare search the harem, and indeed it is almost certain that they would not have done so ; for the Hebrews had too long and too recently been themselves a nomad people, not to have known that a more heinous and inexpiable insult could not be offered to the neutral Kenite Emir, than to disturb the sanctity of his harem, or even to enter, unpermitted, the outer part of his tent. We very much doubt whether they would have ventured, even if they had been certain that Sisera was there, to have entered to kill him, or take him thence, while under Heber's protection. This is an answer to Bishop Patrick, who would have recommended Jael not to have been so hasty to act herself, but to have waited till the pursuers came and took him. They could not take him, or even search for him, without inflicting on Heber a dishonour worse than death ; neither could Jael have given him up to them without bringing everlasting infamy upon her family and tribe."—*Pict. Bible.*

Before this, however, he said to her, " If any man

doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? Thou shalt say, No." He was a heathen; it was quite natural to him to say so. Truth and falsehood were not always clearly distinguished among them. But there is no evidence that she consented to this; it was his wish; but whether she consented to say so is another question.

Then we read of Jael, that she took a nail, and pierced his temple, destroying life at a blow; an act that seems to us cruel, unjustifiable, contrary to all the rites of hospitality, and not certainly to be quoted as a precedent. The only modifying elements that I can adduce are—first, that every Israelite was bound to exterminate the Canaanites; that was a great law. Secondly, if she discovered he was a Canaanite, it would have appeared to us the more merciful plan that she should have given information, than that she should have prostituted the rites of hospitality to so cruel, barbarous, and unexpected treatment of one who fled to her for refuge. I know not on what principles to vindicate it; we only know one great fact, that the Canaanites were to be exterminated; that the Israelites in doing so obeyed the will and the word of God. But we often find, in God's providential government, that he uses bad instruments, which he does not raise up, and overrules bad acts, which he does not consecrate, to the accomplishment of great and good ends which he has in view. Many of these difficulties we do not see clearly now; but what we know not now, we are quite sure we shall either know here or hereafter.

DEBORAH'S SONG.

CHAPTER V.

MAJESTY OF GOD. NATIONAL DEMORALIZATION. RESTORATION.
THE TRIBES. ANATHEMA ON MEROZ. Jael AND THE VIRGIN
MARY. SISERA'S MOTHER AT THE WINDOW.

THE following epitome of this chapter is given in Bush's Notes:—

“The subject matter of the present chapter is the triumphal song, sung by Deborah and Barak, on occasion of the signal victory above recorded of the forces of Israel over the armies of Jabin and Sisera. The spirit of prophecy is nearly allied to the spirit of poetry, and when the efforts of genius are heightened by the promptings of inspiration, we may reasonably look for results that shall distance all human competition. Nor in the present instance shall we look in vain. Considered merely as a specimen of lyric composition, this ode of Deborah may challenge comparison with the finest effusions of the classic muse of any age or country. Though occasionally obscure in the original, and in the English translation, in some instances, scarcely intelligible, yet it evidently breathes the highest spirit of poetry. Its strains are lofty and impassioned; its images bold, varied, and lively; its

diction singularly happy ; and it is pervaded throughout by a vein of mingled beauty and sublimity, to be found in the bards of inspiration only. Borne away by the ecstasy and energy of the divine impulse, she breaks forth in the most abrupt and impassioned appeals and personifications ; at one moment, soaring upwards towards heaven, and then returning to earth ; now touching upon the present, and now upon the past ; and finally closing with the grand promise and result of all prophecy, and of all the dealings of God's providence, the overthrow of the wicked, and the triumph of the good. In arranging the course and connexion of the thoughts in the poem, the following divisions may be easily and naturally traced.

“(1.) A devout thanksgiving for the burst of patriotic feeling, which led the nation to arise and revenge their wrongs, with a summons to the heathen kings to listen to her song of triumph over their allies.—Ver. 1—3.

“(2.) A description of the magnificent scenes at Mount Sinai, and in the plains of Edom, when the Most High manifested himself in behalf of his people, exerting his miraculous power to bring them into the promised land.—Ver. 4, 5.

“(3.) A graphic sketch of the degradation and oppression under which the nation groaned in consequence of their apostasy, the insecurity of travelling, and desertion of the villages during a twenty years' servitude.—Ver. 6—8.

“(4.) The contrast to this exhibited in their present happy state of security from the incursions and depredations of their enemies, especially at the watering-places, which were most exposed ; and a vivid invoca-

tion to herself and Barak, as well as others, to join in a song of praise and triumph to the Author of their deliverance.—Ver. 9—13.

“(5) A commendation of such of the tribes as volunteered on the occasion, and a stern rebuke of those which ignobly remained at home.—Ver. 14—18.

“(6) A glowing description of the battle, and an invocation of curses on the inhabitants of Meroz, for not coming up to the help of their brethren in the time of their extremity.—Ver. 19—23.

“(7) A eulogy upon Jael, with a vivid description of the circumstances of Sisera’s death.—Ver. 24—27.

“(8) A highly poetical change in the imagery, in which the mother of Sisera is introduced in anxious impatience for her son’s return, and confidently anticipating the successful issue of the engagement; concluding with a solemn apostrophe to God, praying that all his enemies may perish in like manner, and expressing the assurance that all that love him shall at last gloriously triumph.—Ver. 28—31.”

We have explained the character of those who are here called Judges; and that among the rest was raised up an illustrious woman, illustrious for her piety, her heroism, and deep sympathy with the wrongs, and encouragement to the avenger of the wrongs of Israel. Her name was Deborah; and she is represented in the previous chapter as helping to deliver her people from Jabin and from Sisera. And in this chapter she recapitulates all the mercies and blessings that they had reaped, all the difficulties they had overcome, the trophies they had gathered, the victories they had gained; and in a song of transcendent beauty, rich with poetic allusions, without a

precedent or parallel in heathen or in modern literature ; it alone gives the Bible a claim as a volume containing the richest poetry, which no other book, even the most ancient and celebrated, excels.

She begins this song by calling upon all to praise the Lord for the avenging of Israel. Israel had sinned ; they had omitted to exterminate a guilty race that were doomed to death by God's righteous sentence ; and God interposed in their extremity and trouble, brought them allies where they expected foes ; and therefore she calls upon all to praise the Lord, that he had avenged them upon their enemies. And then she exclaims, "Hear, O ye kings ; give ear, O ye princes ; I will sing unto the Lord. I will be to your royal ones a precedent and an example of a duty that devolves upon you ;" a duty we are so prone to forget, namely, dependence upon God in the hour of peril through prayer ; and praise to God in the hour of deliverance in songs of gratitude. Now, says Deborah, "I, even I, a weak woman," but whose heart has been touched by the grace of God, "will praise the Lord God of Israel."

She then describes, in language of unparalleled grandeur and magnificence, the effect of God's appearing to give the law. "The earth trembled under the footsteps of its Maker ; the very clouds dropped rain," as if creation wept over the sins and the sufferings of the people. "The mountains melted from before the Lord," or sunk down ; or as it might be rendered, crouched in fear. "In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways ;" the highways were infested with thieves and robbers ;

and the traveller walked through secret byroads to escape the plunderer. "They chose," the people in that corrupt state, "new gods, instead of the God of Israel; there was war in the gates; and there was not an army that could wield the spear, or bear the shield, or go forth to do battle on behalf of Israel. My heart," she says now, "is toward the governors of Israel; I love them; I am thankful to them, that they willingly offered themselves among the people, in order to defend them." Therefore she calls upon the judges of the land, those that ride upon white asses, the dignified habit and position of a judge, and the most honourable position that he could occupy.

"White asses, according to Morier, come from Arabia; their scarcity makes them valuable, and gives them consequence. The men of the law count it a dignity, and suited to their character, to ride on asses of this colour. As the Hebrews always appeared in white garments at their public festivals, and on days of rejoicing, or when the courts of justice were held; so they naturally preferred white asses, because the colour suited the occasion, and because asses of this colour, being more rare and costly, were more coveted by the great and wealthy. The same view is taken of this question by Lewis, who says, the asses in Judea were commonly of a red colour; and therefore white asses were highly valued, and used by persons of superior note and quality."—*Paxton*.

They are now, in consequence of what has been done, delivered from a state of war, of insecurity of property, of internecine conflicts amongst the people of the land, and cowardice, the universal epidemic; they are now delivered from the noise of the archer;

and in the places of drawing water, where the thief came to plunder, and the enemy to assault, the righteous rehearse in triumph and conscious security the glorious acts of God, even his righteous acts towards the villages of Israel.

“We have heard of travellers, that were reduced to almost the last extremity for want of water in the parched deserts, obliged to avoid the places where their wants might be satisfied, from having heard that parties of Arabs were encamped in the neighbourhood; and we have heard of others who from the same cause were obliged to go one or two days’ journey out of their way, to one watering-place, in preference to another that lay directly in their way. No travellers, unless in great force, dare encamp near a well, however pleasant and desirable it might be, from the fear of disagreeable visitors. They water their cattle, and replenish their waterskins in all haste, and then go and encamp at a distance from any roads leading to the well. Dr. Shaw mentions a beautiful rill in Barbary, which is received into a large basin, called *Shrub we Krub*; that is, *Drink and away*, from the great danger of meeting there with robbers and assassins. With equal propriety, and for the same reason, almost every Oriental watering-place might be called *Shrub we Krub*.”—*Pict. Bible*.

And then, addressing herself, she says, “Awake, awake, Deborah;” rise to the magnitude of the occasion, give expression to words, meet vehicles for deep thoughts, and thoughts that are worthy of so transcendent and glorious a theme. She then recapitulates the condition of the different tribes, and how they had acted. “Reuben’s divisions were sad; they

were split among themselves;" their security was therefore less, their danger greater. She complains that Gilead abode beyond Jordan, and Dan remained in ships, and Asher continued on the sea-shore. She describes the conduct of Zebulun and Naphtali, giving each his meed of praise, but acknowledging that they were sustained by a power greater than their own; for she says, "The very stars in their courses fought against Sisera;" that is, divine aid was vouchsafed to those that were warring against him who was the great enemy and oppressor of the children of Israel.

Then, describing the chariots and the cavalry, she says, "Then were the horse hoofs broken by the means of the prancings." It was not the custom then to have horses shod; nor, I believe, is it the custom in the East still. In consequence their feet were more liable to injury when they were used very much, or driven very hard. The hoofs came to be broken, the expression denoting the extreme perils and drudgery to which these horses were exposed whilst they were ridden by the warriors of Israel contending against their and the Lord's enemies. And then she condemns the neutrality of Meroz; not pronounces a private and an individual anathema, but simply gives expression, as the organ of truth, to the judgment that God had already pronounced. It is very important to distinguish, in reading not only this book, but the majority of the Psalms, that when an inspired penman pronounces a curse, or when he says at the close of this chapter, "Let all thine enemies perish," it is not a precedent for us who are not inspired; we are to pray for our enemies, we are to bless them that curse and despitefully use us. But an inspired pen-

man is exactly like a judge upon the bench, who does not doom to death a criminal as a private act, but simply as the organ of the laws and the decision of that country of which he is the servant and the minister. Distinguish always between an inspired penman pronouncing a judgment that he is commissioned to proclaim; and a private individual giving vent to his evil passions, and wishing ill to his enemies.

Then she pronounces blessings upon those that one would have thought did not deserve to be blessed. I explained, in my remarks on the last chapter, in what respect Jael could be justified in her conduct. Every Canaanite was a foe; every Israelite was commissioned to exterminate every Canaanite, not as an act of private revenge, but as a great, public, judicial retribution, of which the Israelites were simply the executioners.

I have often noticed these words, "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be." You are all aware that our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen, when they wish to quote a text triumphantly in defence of the worship—I use the word "worship," clearly understanding its meaning—of the Virgin Mary, they constantly refer to that text, "Blessed art thou among women;" and they say, Mary was so distinguished from the rest of women, that she deserves special worship. Now if "Blessed among women," implies that Mary is to be worshipped, then as Jael is pronounced blessed *above* women, *a fortiori*, Jael is entitled to a greater worship than the Virgin Mary. It is therefore absurd to lay a stress upon the words that they will not bear. And when you come to compare Scripture with Scripture, you

will see that "Blessed art thou among women," and "Blessed above women," are mere eulogistic or complimentary epithets, not meant to teach that either Jael or the Virgin Mary ought to be worshipped.

When it says, "She brought forth butter in a lordly dish," that is explained in the previous chapter to have been cream, or milk; a preparation of both used by the Arabs still, and in a dish of a lordly or a noble size and shape.

"25. *She brought forth butter.* The original *המאה* *hemāh*, here rendered 'butter,' undoubtedly implies something *liquid*. It would perhaps be better translated *cream*, or rather *curdled milk*. 'Sisera complained of thirst, and asked a little water to quench it,' a purpose to which butter is but little adapted. Mr. Harmer indeed urges the same objection to cream, which, he contends, few people would think a very proper beverage for one that was extremely thirsty; and concludes that it must have been buttermilk which Jael, who had just been churning, gave to Sisera. But the opinion of Dr. Russell is preferable, that the *hemah* of the Scriptures is probably the same as the *haymak* of the Arabs, which is not, as Harmer supposed, simple cream, but cream produced by simmering fresh sheep's milk for some hours over a slow fire. It could not be butter newly churned, which Jael presented to Sisera, because the Arab butter is apt to be foul, and is commonly passed through a strainer before it is used; and Russell declares, he never saw butter offered to a stranger, but always *haymak*: nor did he ever observe the Orientals drink buttermilk, but always *leban*, which is coagulated sour milk, diluted with water. It was *leban*, therefore."—*Bush*.

She describes minutely how she acted. And then the close of the chapter, I think, is the most exquisite poetry, the most beautiful touch of pathos, contained possibly in any chapter in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Sisera was slain. He went forth sure of victory; he left word with his mother, his sisters, and servants, that they might expect him to return with prizes and spoils taken from the foe, and given to them as memorials of his heroism, and evidences of his great victory. Well, the mother of Sisera, looking for her son, was waiting at a window; and in her impatience, she cried through the lattice as he seemed to delay, "Why is his chariot so long in coming?" You know impatience, when it is intermingled with a possibility of peril, gives instinctively expression to its feelings, and asks, "Why is he so long; why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" Then it is said, "Her wise ladies," her maids that were about her, "answered her," and she herself even returned the answer to her own question, "Is it possible? have they not sped? That is quite impossible. So brave a general, with so many chariots and horses, and so brilliant an army, and so contemptible a race of Jews to oppose—it is impossible that he can have failed. Have they not divided the prey?" Then showing in one clause, the more strange when uttered by a woman's lips, the degraded state of woman in Eastern, and in Canaanitish and in heathen lands, "to every man a damsel or two. And then to Sisera, the victorious general, no doubt there would be for him, and he is keeping it for himself, a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needle-work"—the vanity of the woman breaking forth amid

the affection of the mother; thinking of the safety of her son it is true; but, even in that moment, of decorations and ornaments for her own royal person.

“Let all thine enemies,” says Deborah, “perish, O Lord: but,” beautiful thought, true as beautiful, “let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might”—never more to set in the west, or to be covered by a cloud.

“In remarking practically on the prayer of Deborah, it is to be observed, that imprecations of evil, when personal and vindictive, are contrary to the mind of God; but when uttered as denunciations of God’s determined purposes against his enemies, they are not unsuited to the most holy character. In this light are many of the Psalms of David to be viewed; and even Paul could say, ‘If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema-maranatha.’ ‘Though our enemies,’ says Henry, ‘are to be prayed *for*, God’s enemies, as such, are to be prayed *against*; and when we see some of God’s enemies remarkably humbled and brought down, that is an encouragement to us to pray for the downfall of all the rest.’ Thus are Deborah’s words to be interpreted. Being prompted by the spirit of inspiration, they are to be regarded not only as an imprecation, but also as a prediction; a prediction which shall assuredly be accomplished in its season upon all that continue to withstand omnipotence. *Let them that love him be as the sun, &c.* These words require simply a practical exposition. They intimate the true distinction between the enemies and the friends of God. The latter are characterised as those that *love* him. If between *men* we could admit a medium between love and hatred,

we can by no means admit of it between God and his creatures. Indifference towards God would be constructive enmity. Those only who love him can be numbered among his friends. In behalf of these the prophetess prays that they may be as 'the sun when he goeth forth in his might.' Under this beautiful image she prays, (1.) That they may shine with ever-increasing splendour. The sun in its early dawn casts but a feeble light upon the world ; but soon proceeds to irradiate the whole horizon, and to burst in full lustre upon those who were a little while before immersed in darkness. Thus the goings forth of the devoted friends and servants of the Most High diffuse at first but an indistinct and doubtful gleam ; but through the tender mercy of God they advance, and their light shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day. (2.) That they may diffuse benefits wheresoever they go. The sun is the fountain of light and life to the whole terraqueous sphere. If we look at the places where his genial beams for months together never shine, the whole face of nature wears the appearance of desolation and death ; and nothing but the return of his kindly influences restores her to life. Thus in countries where the friends of God are not found, the whole population is in a state of spiritual and moral death. But in *their* light, light is seen, and from them is spread abroad a vital influence, which wakes up all around them to new life and power."—*Bush*.

THE CURSE ON COWARDICE.

“Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”—JUDGES v. 23.

MEROZ was a tribe contiguous to the scene of battle; and for Meroz, therefore, to assume an attitude of indifference amidst the very crash of conflicting armies, with its own interests involved in the issue, was altogether inexcusable. We learn from the passage at the very first reading of it, that what aid is rendered to the people of God in spiritual and divine things, is regarded by God in heaven as rendered to himself. Here is a precious thought for us to carry out into the world, and into all its scenes; that the good you do, from a pure motive, with a beneficent end, to a hungry, naked individual, a child of God, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven, sends from earth a bright flame that is not lost amid the splendours of eternal day; and the thanks of that recipient of your bounty enter into the presence of God and of the Lamb, as music not inaudible or unappreciated amid the ceaseless anthem-peal of them who sing continually, “Glory, and honour, and thanksgiving to our God, and

to the Lamb for ever." We need not this text to teach it; for our blessed Lord has said, "Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren"—oh, precious identity, oh, sustaining fact!—"ye have done it unto me." Therefore, Meroz not coming forward to aid the people of God was practically and substantially regarded by him as refusing to give help, where help accepted was a greater honour upon him that rendered it than an advantage to him that received it. The refusal of Meroz on this occasion was positively suicidal. The welfare of each individual part is promoted by the welfare of the whole. He that can only pray for his own party, or supplicate blessings upon his own sect only, is not only narrow-minded, but he acts in some degree suicidally. It is in the prosperity of the whole that the prosperity of each lies; it is in raising the temperature of the Christian life of the church universal that the temperature, the moral temperature, of each individual heart will be raised and sustained also. The conduct of Meroz on this occasion was most inconsistent with the character of God's people. It is impossible for any to be selfish Christians. You may be selfish men; but to speak of a selfish Christian is to use a positive contradiction. We should never think of speaking of an ignorant scholar, of an honest thief, or of a liberal miser. And in the same manner, it is absurd, it is nonsense, to speak of a selfish Christian; a bad, a drunken, a lying Christian,—he is not a Christian at all if he is selfish, if he lies; and to charge Christianity with the sins that have been perpetrated in its injured name, is to fling reproach at God, instead of concentrating it where it

ought, on the corruption of the human heart. All God's true people are patriotic, benevolent, if not always as they should be beneficent, to the degree that is required. They love God; they are catholic in their feelings, large in their hearts, all-embracing in their sympathies.

Moses said, in pleading for the welfare of his people, "And if not, blot me out of the book of life." And Paul said, such was his patriotism, "My heart's desire and prayer for Israel is, that they may be saved."

The enemies of God's people are neither few nor feeble. For a soldier to underrate the strength of the enemy is just as mischievous as to overrate it. And for Christians to underrate the opposition they have to encounter in passing through this world may be as injurious as overrating it. To underrate leads to presumption and rashness; to overrate will lead to despondency. That we may have a just estimate of those with whom we have to battle, let us listen to the inspired apostle, when he says, "We war not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places." It is all very well for gentlemen of a sarcastic turn and a humorous disposition to talk of Satan lightly, and to speak of him as a mere phantom of imagination to frighten children with. There is an archangel fallen; retaining the archangel's strength, inspired by the fiend's depravity; and such is his power, such are his attributes, that he can do what I think is most awful—he can enter into the mind, touch it at a thousand points; start thoughts, and kindle passions, awaken desires; and organize, in some instances, those dread sins, those terrible crimes, with which

sometimes a desperate and depraved life is crowned. These are not simply human, they are also the inspiration of the Wicked One, who finds admission by doors that should have been shut, and instead of being prayed against and thrust out, is lodged as a welcome guest, treated with hospitality, undervalued, and disregarded, as a hostile power, until he has secured a foothold that ends in a felon's name and a suicide's grave. We war, not against flesh and blood only, but against powers and principalities, and spiritual wickedness in high places. We war against the mighty—"The help of the Lord against the mighty."

The great sin with which Meroz was charged on this occasion was not positive opposition to God, but apathy, indifference. There are a great many easy-minded people who seem to think, "Well, if we are not very great blessings to the world, we are not very great banes; if we do not do very much good," they wrap their mantle of complacency around them, and say, "we do not do very great harm." How monstrous is such reasoning! The inhabitants of Meroz were condemned not because they were banes, but because they were not blessings. There is no such thing as being neutral in this great conflict. You may think you are neutral; but whether you believe it or not, you have taken a side. And those persons that are at this moment trying to be neutral between God and the world, between error and truth, between virtue and vice, will find themselves like parties between two advancing armies; they will receive the compassion of neither, and the fire of both. There is no such thing as neutrality; what seems to be so is a suicidal

deception. A lesson it is desirable to teach is,—it cannot consist with any true and honest reception of the Gospel, that any one can, in the great controversy between sin and holiness, between error and truth, be neutral. The first reason I assign for this assertion is, man is made to feel. We are not cold icicles that can purely reflect an image; we are warm, sensitive beings, with intense likes, intense dislikes; with a heart full of affections of hate or love; just as we have an intellect full of faculties, and attributes, and powers. And, if that be the case, it is impossible that we can live without feeling; it is as impossible that we can know the Gospel without having created within us all the fervour of a glorious passion, with all the fixity of an immutable principle. If, then, we are creatures necessarily made to feel, endued with manifold affections, we must also have excitements corresponding to these. The normal beat of health is maintained when the whole of our mental and moral powers are properly balanced; let your mind, or your mental faculties be over-stimulated, and you suffer; let your affections be too absorbed, or strongly directed, and the health suffers; let the body be overwrought, and its strength will decay. But let every faculty, affection, and power have its due stimulus, each getting its proper and proportionate nutriment, and then man will feel the steady beat of health in his heart, and the elasticity of strength in every footstep. Man must have nutriment for his affections; that is to say, just and suitable excitement, for without some excitement he cannot live. Life itself is a sort of fever, a sort of ceaseless stimulus. Just as the mind wants light, and its faculties want action, so the affec-

tions or feelings of the heart want excitement ; and if you do not find it in religion, you will seek it and find it in vice or in vanity, in literature or in science, or in more guilty and equivocal things. But you must have excitement ; you cannot live without it ; and a certain amount for every faculty is right. There is one coal kindled from the altars of heaven, that, cast into the heart by Him that kindles it, will awaken in it feelings of delight, and be a source of excitement, which can be created only by the love of Christ that passeth understanding.

Not only must man have excitement,—not only must he have his affections acted upon ; that is, not only is he incapable of being a neutral creature, but the very design of the gospel is evidently to awaken feeling. What was our great loss at the Fall ? Love to God. What has been the passion implanted by sin ? Hatred to God. I am not exaggerating when I call it hatred to God ; for the apostle tells us not only that the human heart is full of hatred to God, but that it is, till it be regenerated, enmity itself to God. And if we have lost the love that once glowed within us, and if we have received in its stead the hatred kindled from below ; it is the great design of the gospel, indicated in every page, to expel the intrusive hatred, and to relight upon the cold altar the ancient and primeval love ; so that the most momentous question we can ask is, “ Lovest thou me ? ” and he that can say, “ Thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee,” responds to the design of the Gospel, which is not only to enlighten the intellect, but also to impress, awaken, and inspire all the affections of the heart. And there is not the least risk in accepting this reli-

gion of imbibing what is called fanaticism. The world may view zeal as fanaticism, and it is possible for even good men to be zealous about crotchets, while they are too little zealous about great realities; and it is quite possible for zeal sometimes to explode like a firework. It is quite possible for fanaticism to assume a religious aspect, and to lead the world to think that great interest in religion is fanaticism. But there is a wide distinction between fanaticism and Christian enthusiasm. Fanaticism is kindled from beneath; it is the rocket that darts through the air, illuminating the black night; and is suddenly extinguished, leaving it darker than before. But enthusiasm, Christian feeling, is like the subterranean heat in southern and in eastern lands, which is detected not by its explosions, but by the golden harvests that grow upon its soil, and the fertility with which nature smiles under its inspiring influence. Fanaticism was incarnate in Ignatius Loyola; Christian enthusiasm in Paul the apostle. The first built an Inquisition; the last laid the foundations of the church of the living God. The design of this Gospel, we have said, is to awaken feeling. Not only is it designed to awaken deep feeling, but it has this tendency. Take any one doctrine in this blessed book; see if it be not fitted to awaken feeling. Let us take this instance—"I am by nature lost." Here is a terrible truth. In explaining and unfolding these great truths, we find the very use of words almost darkening instead of lighting up ideas. Let us try to realize the thought, that we were born into this world lost, ruined, miserable, condemned. We do not need to do some wickedness to be lost for ever: it is not re-

quired that we should commit some tremendous crime in order that we may be sent to everlasting ruin. "We are by nature," says the apostle, "children of wrath, even as others; dead in sins; without God, without Christ, without hope in the world." This one thought, in proportion as it is apprehended, must awaken feeling. Surely, a man under sentence of death must be the subject of deep and penetrating emotions. We are, too, so helpless, that unless your heart and my heart be changed—not patched up—but revolutionized by the Holy Spirit of God, neither of us can see the kingdom of heaven. Can this be held in apathy? Let us take another thought—God so loved me, a rebel, who hated him, who asked not his interposition, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life. Is not this fitted to awaken deep emotion, deep in proportion as we believe? Or turn your eyes, in the words of the poet, to Calvary; read that countenance so marred, the channel of ceaseless tears; see that Sufferer who has laid aside the glory that he had in heaven, and has become a sufferer in life, a sacrifice in death, a man of sorrows always and everywhere. See one taking upon him what was never in him—my sins; and bowed down beneath their pressure, and exhausting in his own soul and body the punishment I deserved, and bearing the curse that I should have borne, and drinking the bitter cup that I should have had to drink for ever. Is it possible to read this, and believe it to be fact, without feeling, in the very core of the heart, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of the love of Christ, which passeth all understanding?

Does not the name of a great philanthropist, who has visited the dungeons of Europe, who has been in ceaseless communion with sorrow, with suffering, with sin, who has spent and been spent simply to do good, come like a sweet sound in your hearing, and awaken in your feelings responsive love? Or do you read of some great soldier who has perilled his life, and dared all that man fears, and forsaken all that man loves, to fight for you and yours, your hearths and your homes, in the language of Deborah, upon the high places of the field? Does not his name stir the emotions of your heart like a trumpet roll? In proportion to the good he has done, you feel gratitude that cannot be expressed. And shall that Name which covers more philanthropy than the world ever tasted, which represents greater sacrifices than the greatest of the world ever made—shall not the very mention of that Name, which is above every name, stir, as by a divine voice, every emotion of love, of gratitude, of adoration, and of praise? Is it possible to be a Christian, and yet not to feel; to believe, and yet to be cold and immovable as the granite, when the wind and the waters sweep over it? It is impossible.

NEITHER COLD NOR HOT.

CHAPTER V. 23.

TREMENDOUS issues are at stake in the Gospel, as recorded in the pages of Christianity. These lead us to infer that, if we believe these truths, we must be the subjects of very deep feeling. These are not riches, nor fame, nor honour, nor rank; but the restoration of the ruin of that thing of gigantic value, the soul. By estimating the soul's greatness, I form something like an approximate idea of what must be the depth of the soul's ruin. When I think of man's soul—that wondrous power which in a Newton could unbraid the sunbeam, weigh the stars, and count their number, measure to an eighth of an inch their relative distances, and calculate to a minute their velocity; which can launch the great ship upon the sea, and bridge the wide ocean, and bring America within seven days' sail of the shores of England; which can set a whole village of five hundred people upon the iron rail, and transport it with all the comfort of a drawing-room at the rate of forty or fifty miles an hour to the very ends of the land: the being that can do all this may be admired, or he may be condemned; but you dare not despise or undervalue him. Now if the soul be intrinsically so great, what a catastrophe must be its ruin! When

an archangel falls he ceases not sinking till he becomes a fiend; when a soul is finally ruined, the result is too terrible for human speech to express. Its torment is likened in one place to "The worm that dieth not; the fire that is not quenched." And if it be true that each unconverted man stands upon the verge of that precipice; that every natural man, like Damocles of old, has the sharp-edged sword hanging over his neck, suspended by a single horse-hair; that we are in jeopardy every moment till renewed and changed; then I protest it is impossible not to feel, and to feel deeply and poignantly, if we honestly and sincerely believe these things. We are neither granite nor stoics. We should not respect a man who knows some great truth that relates to his own eternal interests, and those of his fellow-creatures, but has no feeling about it. Great genius may repress emotions; it may muffle feeling; but depend upon it, under the countenance that seems most calm, there is often hid the keenest feeling; and very many times he that appears to men to smile, feels very differently and keenly within. There are but two hearts that can afford to be happy; the heart that is very light, and the heart that is very heavy. And very often the most playful men have the heaviest and the saddest hearts within. But at all events,* if we believe these great truths, it is impossible that we can be insensible in their reception and under their action. Then if Meroz was criminal and untrue in attempting neutrality upon the edge of the field of battle, when his country and its enemies were in collision; surely a Christian never can be neutral without crime, when the question is ruin or salvation.

What terrible emotions does the merchant feel who sees bankruptcy staring him in the face! In the city of London there are hearts racked and torn by emotions to which many of us who profess to be, and probably are Christians, are strangers.

The most dreadful bankruptcy, however, is the bankruptcy of the soul. What efforts are put forth what feelings, what anxieties, what watchfulness, what emotion, are felt by that man who seeks to climb the rugged sides of the mount that leads to eminence and fame! And shall they who run a divine race; shall we who are candidates for glory; shall we, who stand between two eternities, on a space washed by the one, and wasted by the other—be insensible to thoughts, doctrines, truths, that awaken the songs of angels in glory, and the very recollection of which, now gone for ever, makes the lost in ruin, yearn and long that they had one hour of the privileges which we taste every Sunday?

To have such feeling is perfectly reasonable; and you may as well expect cold iron to be welded without intense heat as the human heart to find its way back to God without the red heat of deep feeling. And that man who has no feeling about religion, or on the subject of religion; no anxiety, no joy, no happiness, no thrilling sympathy, ought to suspect his heart or his conscience, and indeed his hold of religion altogether. Either the Gospel contained in this book is a gigantic fraud and falsehood, that ought to make every honest man burn it; or it is so stupendous a truth, that when we have felt the deepest, and done the most, we have not risen even within a thousand miles of the level that we ought to tread.

Was the gaoler of Philippi insensible in that day of his new birth? Was there no emotion at Pentecost? Was there no deep feeling in the apostle Paul at his new birth? Were there no inexpressible feelings in the bosom of the prodigal as his feet first crossed the threshold, and his face first glowed in the light and warmth of his father's fireside? We know that all these felt deeply. Speak to me, brethren, of sight without light, of fire without heat, of life without breath; and then you may speak to me of religion, or piety, without deep and earnest feeling.

I do not mean that you should have no feeling in relation to the things of this world, or no sympathy with the objects and pursuits of this world; far from it. We may take an interest in all that is going on in the world; we are not required by deep and true feeling in reference to God to be blind to what is beautiful in nature, or deaf to what is thrilling and glorious in sweet sounds. In other words, this religion of ours is characterised above all things by its intense common sense. It does not bid you become monks, or run to the cell of the ascetic, and scourge yourselves in order that you may avoid the perils of the worldling; but it lays down a law, that, like the great laws that govern the natural world, indicates the inspiration and the creation of a God. Use, not abuse, of the lawful, is its prescription. "Brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that they that weep be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion of it passeth away." What good sense is there in this blessed book! how truly

does it indicate even here the inspiration of Him who is indeed infinite wisdom !

But having shown you that everything in this blessed book is calculated and adapted to awaken feeling, let me try to explain why men hesitate and hover between ; or why they are sometimes led to diverge from what is duty, and to incline to what is not. Now the inhabitants of Meroz, I have shown in this passage, were cursed by God, not because they did what was an outward and visible crime, but because they did not what was an obvious duty. Sin is not simply doing what we ought not, but also leaving undone what we should do. In other words, it is not only sin to commit a crime, but, having an opportunity of giving to what is good, or doing what is good, to omit or overlook it. Now these inhabitants of Meroz were professors of the religion of the true God ; but they dared not, cowards that they were, do justice to their own convictions. This was sinful, for if a conviction be true, let us not flinch from carrying it out to all its issues ; a creed that is worth believing is always worth practising ; and if your creed and your conviction be impracticable and impossible, depend upon it they are not founded upon the Word of God. But the reason why men do not carry out their convictions, nor feel the deep interest we have been speaking of, arises from many causes. A man seems to pray like a saint—like a rapt saint from heaven ; he speaks true religion, and seems to be sustained and actuated by it : but when some great crisis comes that demands decision for God, for truth, for righteousness—strange fact ! he is found to vacillate, falter, or hang back, and so fail you at

the moment when his energy would be most precious, and his decision would animate a thousand that were looking on around him. Now what can be the cause of such a course as this? Many of the reasons why true Christian men flinch, and fail, where duty is obvious, are some of them such as do credit to their hearts as natural men; but there are other reasons that are untenable. Very often we have met with a professor of the Gospel and of the truth who does not like to do this, or to stand up for that, because he is afraid that he should be thought to profess more than he believes and feels. This is a very creditable feeling; and whatever feeling a good man has that stands in the way of doing what we believe to be his duty, we ought never to insult or caricature, but seek to disentangle and correct. Now it is quite right that your profession on any great occasion should not go beyond what you feel; but then you must not forget that it should not come short of what you feel. Because you will not be a hypocrite by professing more than you feel, why should you be a coward in flinching from carrying out what you feel? To act beneath your conscientious convictions is not a virtue, because to go beyond your conscientious convictions is hypocritical. We reprobate the ostentation of the man who appends a text to an invitation to dine, or who cannot open his mouth upon any one subject without bringing in all the studied phrasology of religion; and we feel there is in his case cant, not Christianity. But because we so feel, we must also reprobate the conduct of that man who knows what is duty, but out of a timid, cowardly fear lest he seem to approach ostentation, will shrink from ful-

filling it. And let me add, the very way to weaken the convictions that you have, and to wither down to the very roots the truths that you know, is to hesitate in carrying them out. What true sense do we find in that maxim of our Lord, "If any man will do his will, he will know of the doctrine whether it be of God!" Here is a fact we have always noticed, and we are sure it is fact; the man that lives up to the light that he has is not thereby saved; but he will never be left without increase of light: whereas the man that lives on constantly beneath the light that he has, will in all probability lose what he has, and be left to the reign of unmitigated darkness. He that embraces a conviction which he knows to be true, or accepts a creed which he is sure is inspired, and carries it out, and acts up to it, will find not only present comfort, but increase of light and life, and joy and peace.

Another reason why persons vacillate, is the influence of party, of friendship, of the circle in which they move, and the friends with whom they are associated. Every man, however mean he may be, however unknown in this world, has a little circle about him that is to him practically what we call the world; and the greatest man, treading the highest level in the realm, is merely a little man lifted a little higher, and set in a much intenser light; he has merely his somewhat larger party, or world. Now it is a very natural feeling, and a very proper feeling, "We do not like to run in the teeth of those that we love; we do not like even to cross their prejudices; we still less like to do what we know will be a disruption of the ties that knit and keep us all compacted together." This is a feeling, perfectly natural, and in its place very

good. But if we see clearly a course to be that of duty, and duty that is divine in its sanctions, we must leave friend, and brother, and sister, and father, and mother, and go up, like Abraham, alone, and hear God speak, and take our direction from God alone. The old law has still its obligations unexhausted in the nineteenth century: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." And if you be the servants of men, their passions, their prejudices, their preferences, you cannot be the servants of God. If our little world, or our great world, our party or our people, demand the sacrifice of duty, we must fling all ties to the wind, and, if needs be, stand alone. There is to my mind something sublime in the conduct of a man who cuts every tie that binds him to a party, religious or political, or private or social; and even if mistaken in his judgment, dares to stand alone, and say, "I am convinced that this is right; and if the whole world oppose, I will cleave to my conscientious conviction, whatever be the issue." Let him be wrong, you respect him; and if he be right, then he rises from the low, grovelling position of one in a party to be a Luther, or a Knox. What did Luther say when told, "Luther, the whole world is against you?" "I have God's truth within me; and if the whole world be against Martin Luther, Martin Luther then will be against the whole world." Now if such a man be wrong in a conviction, you respect and reverence him; and if he be right, then he has a peace within and a halo around that really ennoble.

Another cause why men stand between two, and hesitate, is the fear of public censure. In this age in which we live everybody knows that whatever a con-

spicuous person does is sure to be reflected from broad sheets in all directions, if the broad sheet can only make a little capital from it; or turn it to account, or enjoy a little amusement in consequence. But many people are so sensitive that they hesitate to do what in their consciences they believe to be duty, because they are afraid that next morning a torrent of abuse will probably descend upon them, or that they will be caricatured, and scoffed at, and derided, by those who profess to know better than themselves.

I do not say that this is the character of our press: for I believe our daily press, with all its faults, to be the purest and the best in the world; and we are very thankful for it. But then the opinion of the greatest paper in the kingdom is but the opinion of a private man, who sits down in his private room, and translates his I into We; and thus the world thinks the heavens thundering, because he is pleased to give his judgment; and if his censure be founded on your having done wrong, your best way is to take the censure as proper chastisement, and be thankful; if his censure be upon you for having done what is right, then hear reverberating from heaven the approbation of God; and when God praises, you can smile with ineffable complacency upon the censure and the frowns of the wide world itself. Were duty popular, we should be in Paradise, not in this world. If we expect here our reward for what we have conscientiously and fearlessly done, we are mistaken. It is the law still, that Christianity and martyrdom, duty and sacrifice, are near to each other—relations, nearer than we sometimes suppose: and we must be satisfied to do what is right because it is right, and leave the

whole world to justify or to condemn ; for no earthly applause is better than the idle wind, when God censures ; and no earthly censure is worse than the buzz of the passing insect on a summer's day, when God praises. And therefore, do not let the fear of censure, nor the fear of disruption of ties that are near and dear, ever for one moment tempt you to flinch from doing what you believe to be right, or from upholding what you believe to be truth, and from carrying out your conviction to its utmost possible, provided it be legitimate, extent. Do not fear to say Protestantism is true, if all the world should say the opposite. Do not fear to say our Sabbaths should be nationally revered, if thousands should say the contrary. Do not fear to say God's word is true, and is the only mirror of the path of duty, and the only prescription for heaven, if all men should assert the contrary. See that your convictions rest upon the strongest and surest foundations ; and go right on, counting not heads that follow, caring not for applause nor censure ; but binding your heart to duty, and remaining steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Such, then, are some of the reasons, untenable, but creditable in their place, I admit, founded on some of the finest instincts of our nature, but to be renounced ever as they interfere with accepting truth or doing duty.

Are you, then, convinced of the truth of God ? Are you satisfied that this blessed religion is true, that Christ is the only name under heaven whereby you can be saved ? Do not hesitate to hold that fast ; let no temptation lead you to abjure it ; let no prospect

of advantage induce you for one moment to flinch. For a day comes when the youngest, the stoutest, the healthiest, the bravest, in this world, must lie down upon the last bed; and at that day, and at that hour, when the light of eternity streams through the casement, and shines not like the light of day into the eye only, but into the most sequestered cells and hidden places of the conscience; when, as is a well-known fact, memory becomes preternaturally sensitive, to recollect that I said one word that I would had not been said, or written one line that I would blot out, or given one vote that I would recall—what distressing recollection! how painful! not unpardonable, but even then and there, through the blood of Christ Jesus, there is remission for the worst of it all. But to have on that bed the recollection that if I have not done all that I would, I have done what I could; that I have at least tried to carry out my convictions of truth, is surely a comforting reflection, a happy thought.

If you ask, But how am I to assist? How am I to come to the help of God against the mighty? I can only enumerate some means of doing so—vindicating the truth against error; identifying ourselves with God's people, with God's kingdom, with God's cause; and praying for all the people of God, that they may be increased and multiplied. We are to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty by ourselves being Christians, and contributing ourselves as lights to lighten the church and the world. And we are to come to his help by acting as missionaries, aiding missionary efforts at home and abroad. And, oh! seek for that inspiration and the love of

Christ, which the Holy Ghost can implant in the heart; that divine love in your heart which will thaw all frozen feelings, and let loose the sealed springs and fountains of the soul; and enable you not simply to come, but to run, to the help of the Lord against the mighty: and while all his enemies shall perish, you, his by deliberate adoption, his by conscientious conviction, his by the fervour of your love, his by the fixity of your adherence, will shine as the sun in his strength. Amen.

SIN AND SUFFERING.

CHAPTER VI.

MAN'S EXTREMITY IS GOD'S OPPORTUNITY. ANGEL. VISIT.
ENCOURAGEMENT. A SIGN. ITS WEAKNESS IN OUR CASE.
THE ANGEL WAS JESUS. THE APPEAL OF JOASH. GIDEON
SEEKS ANOTHER SIGN. GIDEON'S PLACE.

WE have here a recapitulation of a fact of which we have constantly read in these most remarkable and instructive annals; namely, that in the face of all the solemn warnings they had received, and the lessons they had been taught, the children of Israel still did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. What a striking proof that no mass of miracles, no splendour of sign, can ever bring a people to do that which is right, unless the grace of the Holy Spirit of God be vouchsafed to them! The common result followed their conduct, just as effect follows cause, as shadow follows light,—they were punished, and cast out: and instead of dwelling in their own bright and happy homes, they had only dens in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds, to live in. And what was still more painful and desolating to them, the very seed that they had sown in spring, containing the hopes of the coming harvest, had no sooner been sown, and begun to grow up, and be of any use, or fit to be cut down, than hordes of Arabs or Bedouins, as we should call them now, Midianites and Amalekites,

burst upon their fields, reaped it for them, and left them not only to live in caves and dens, but to starve from want in the midst of the fields that they themselves had sown. Now all this is recorded, that we may learn that lesson which is as true in our meridian as in theirs, as true in this year as it was two or three thousand years ago, that sin is the shame and the ruin of a people, and that righteousness alone exalts a nation. Wherever we see judgments, we may not always be able to specify individual sins—for that is extremely difficult; but wherever we see God's providential judgment, there we may see in some shape the fruit and the result of some man's sin, individual, domestic, or national.

But God exhibited here again that beautiful trait in his own blessed character—so often a fact in his government—when man's extremity arrives, God's opportunity begins. He sent a prophet to the children of Israel, reminded them of their great sins, warned them that their own guilt had provoked the judgments which had come upon them. "There came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash, the Abi-ezrite; and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress;" a striking proof of the precarious tenure by which they held what was to be their daily bread. "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto Gideon, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Now no consolation could be greater, no prospect brighter with hope, than that God should be with him whom he was to send forth to fight the battles of his country, to rid his oppressed nation of plunderers and thieves,

and to vindicate them as a people repenting of the past, and resolved to justify all the confidence placed in them, in reference to the future. When the Lord looked upon him and said, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites; have not I sent thee?" Gideon said, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? I am descended of no illustrious lineage, whose name would be like magic when sounded in the ears of my enemies; I myself am the very least illustrious, the least strong, in my father's house!" The answer of God was sufficient: "I will be with thee;" my presence supersedes all others; my strength is made perfect in the greatest weakness; I have not chosen thee, nor predestinated thee to gain the victory, because thou art wise, and great, and strong; but I have chosen thee because thou wert just the reverse; that it may be seen that the victory is gained not by might, nor by power; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

Gideon, with that perfectly natural diffidence in his own powers, and with those doubts and suspicions of the reality of the voice that he had just heard, asks that he might have also a sign. "If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me." Now in that age this was a most natural demand; and instead of being surprised that God vouchsafed to authenticate his own word by a sign that seems to us comparatively paltry, we should recollect that the human race had its infancy as well as each human individual; and that the lesson book that is fit for the infant, we are not to despise, because we have got above and beyond it.

And if in that day they needed signs, it was only evidence of their imperfect maturity; and if God vouchsafed to give signs, it was only evidence of that condescending goodness in the Great Parent that takes care of an infant's steps, and oversees and gives strength to the greatest of them that are his own. But is it not true that even in this age there is a demand for signs? How often do you hear persons say, "Well, we think there is truth in the Bible; but if God would only give us some sign from heaven, or some great and impressive token upon earth, then we should be satisfied." You would not be satisfied; amid overwhelming light such sign is now not required; you would see the sign to-day; you would be awed, at first, but you would not be convinced. No amount of terror can convince a man; no splendour of sign can change the heart. What men need is not increase of evidence that this book is true, but increase of teachableness in the heart, that they may be convinced that it is true. In other words, the evidence for the truth of this book is so varied, so irresistible, that one tithe of it is accepted every day by a jury, and recognised every day by a judge. The truth is, it is not evidence that we want, but teachableness; it is not a sign from heaven, or additional comment upon the book; but a new heart wherewith to read the old book, which is promised of God, and is able to make wise unto salvation.

The sign that God gave Gideon was bringing fire out of the rock by the touch of the staff that the angel held in his hand. But what was the result upon Gideon? "Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." He

asked for a miracle, he saw the miracle ; but then, instead of being more cheered and encouraged by it for his mission, he was depressed and alarmed. Such is poor human nature. He built there, however, an altar ; and he called that altar Yehovah-shalom, which means, "Yehovah, our peace." Who this angel of the Lord was, it is difficult to say ; he was evidently not a created angel, for he speaks as the Lord. And yet, again, there is a distinction in the name by which he is introduced. Where we read, "Angel of the Lord," it is not always "of the Lord," though it is in one instance, but sometimes "Angel—Lord."

When Gideon speaks to him, he calls him "My Lord," in small letters, denoting not necessarily Deity. But when he is called, in another place, "The angel of the LORD," it is in large letters, denoting Yehovah ; and in that case the Hebrew words may be translated, not "Angel of Jehovah," but "Angel Jehovah ;" literally, "The sent Jehovah." And hence divines have thought, with great probability, that the being who appeared here was none else than our blessed Lord ; the same that appeared in the burning bush, in the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night ; at the rending of the rock in the desert ; in the passage through the Red Sea ; in the passage through the Jordan ; and in all the signs, and wonders, and miracles, that were wrought for that people in their progress into Palestine.

The command came, to the effect that he should take a bullock, "even the second bullock that thy father hath, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it." The groves among the Canaanites were very much like the

groves in our own country some 2000 years ago. The Druids were so called from their having oaks as their temple walls, groves of oak being the early places for superstitious worship. The father of Gideon was evidently an idolater; he was ordered, however, to take the bullock from his father, and to cut down the grove in which his father worshipped, and to take the wood of the grove, and consume it, in order to offer up the sacrifice. Now what does this show? That if one gets more enlightened than one's parent, one is not to fall back into the darkness of the parent, who had not the same opportunity; but to embrace the clearer light, avail oneself of the richer privilege, and do what is duty, if all the world, and all our ancestors before us, should have done the reverse; and believe what is truth, whoever in the past or present may believe the contrary.

We then read that Joash said to all that stood against him, "Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning; if he be a god, let him plead for himself." The argument was so far fair: If this being, this woodstock that you have carved so beautifully into the shape of a human being, if it be a god, then of course it must have the attributes of a god; and if he can save himself, he does not need our protection; but if he cannot save himself, then of course he cannot be a god, and it is of no use keeping him; he must be a stock, and you worship, therefore, an image, instead of the living and true God. But what is said here, "He that will plead for him, let him be put to death," applied to a theocracy; for you will recollect that in Israel, God was their King, as

well as the God that they worshipped, and the laws were then that the idolater should be put to death. But under the dispensation in which we now live, idolaters are not to be put to death; this would be persecution, it would be crime, if we had the power or the disposition to do so. We are to try to convince them, to lead them to the more excellent way, and to show them, by the light and splendour of our consistent example, that ours is the true and the only faith.

We then read that Gideon, just like human nature, was not satisfied with one sign, he wanted another. In fact, the appetite grows for such signs as it is indulged; they do not really carry conviction; they were needed at the dawn of a new era; they are superseded now, as I have said, by evidences that alone prove the truth of the dispensation under which we now are. He therefore asks that his fleece might be wet with dew in the night, while all the ground round it was dry. Now this was a very weak request of his, for it was not a very convincing miracle; and Gideon evidently felt it, because one knows quite well that if a fleece, a sheep-skin, be laid upon the dry ground in the night, that the dew will saturate the wool, and leave the ground dry; it would not be a convincing miracle; and his taking the fleece, and wringing out a bowl full of water, would not convince anybody that there had been a divine presence, for they would have justly said, "It may be explained according to the ordinary laws of nature." And Gideon evidently saw, or heard the objection; and therefore he asked God to reverse the process, and the reverse was really a miracle, that the fleece should remain dry, and that all the ground round it should become wet with dew.

How condescending was God to meet man's demands, to accommodate his goodness to man's weakness, and grudging no display, despising no prayer, that should lead to conviction, to duty, and to truth !

It is exceedingly difficult to determine whether Gideon desired the working of this miracle for the confirmation of his own wavering faith, or mainly to strengthen the confidence of his followers. From the circumstances of his interview with the Angel, from the success of his endeavours to destroy idolatry in his father's house, from the readiness of several of the tribes to enlist under his banners, and more especially from its being said just before, that he was "clothed with the Spirit of the Lord," it would seem scarcely credible that he could have desired any stronger assurance himself of the divine presence and blessing. Yet, considering the weakness of human nature, it is more than possible that this might have been the case ; that the view of the great multitudes of the enemy may have rather intimidated his spirit, and made him anxious for a still further manifestation of the Divine favour, as the seal of his commission. Some have even supposed that God, who intended to vouchsafe to him these new tokens of his mission, put into his heart to ask them. However this may be, the result went, (1) *To illustrate the Divine condescension.* God, instead of being offended with his servant, kindly acceded to his request. A fellow-creature who had given such solemn promises would have been quite indignant at finding his veracity seemingly called in question. How offensive was the apparent tenor of the request :—" If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, and *do as thou hast said,*

behold I will put a fleece of wool on the floor ; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, *then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.*" Nor did even this suffice ; he must go still further, and prove God a second time by reversing the request, before he can believe *that God will do as he has said.* Yet the Most High, in his amazing clemency, far from being offended, gives him the satisfaction he desires, and accommodates himself to the wishes of his doubting servant ! "Is this, O Lord, the manner of men !"

(2) *To show the efficacy of prayer.* It was prayer that prevailed in this instance. With great humility and much tenderness of spirit, Gideon besought the Divine interposition. When he repeated his request for a second sign, the reverse of the former, he did it with an humble apology, like Abraham in similar circumstances, deprecating God's displeasure, because it looked so much like a capricious distrust ; and his supplication prevailed. So we, under circumstances of pressing exigency, may look for a gracious answer to our importunate prayers. Not that we are to expect miraculous manifestations, for the age of miracles is past ; but we may confidently expect that, even in relation to temporal matters, our prayers will not go forth in vain ; while in reference to spiritual matters, they shall descend almost in visible answers on our souls. Were we to suppose the whole church, or neighbourhood where we dwell, to be in a state of the utmost barrenness and desolation, as it respects the blessings of salvation, yet if we cry earnestly to God, the dew of his grace shall descend upon us in the richest abundance. If, on the other hand, the judgments of

Heaven are poured forth around us, to us a merciful exemption shall be given, according to the Divine promise, "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee." No man can conceive to what an extent God will magnify his grace and condescension towards an humble suppliant, calling upon him from the depths of his soul, till he has himself made the happy experiment: "We may ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us."—*Bush*.

GIDEON.

CHAPTER VII.

ISRAEL HUMBLD. DEVOTEDNESS. TEST OF. DIOGENES' CUP.
GIDEON'S ARMY REDUCED TO THREE HUNDRED. THE DREAM
OF THE MIDIANITE. STRATAGEMS.

AT first sight it would appear as if the incidents recorded in this chapter were too trivial to have really been suggested and inspired by God, or to have been incorporated as lessons into that book which is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path. But you will find in this book, just as in God's outer world of creation, that minute things, which seem to us trivial, have, nevertheless, when examined in all their relationships and aspects, very magnificent and important issues, relations, and places. If we only recollect that the Israelites had sinned in not putting to death all the Canaanites and Midianites in their land, according to God's judicial sentence; and that God had left these nations, in consequence of their sinful omission of duty, as thorns in their sides, and snares to them, we shall have the reason why God so humbles while he saves his people; and records incidents, as we shall see, not trivial, if they were the teachers of great moral and spiritual lessons.

First of all, Gideon was raised up, as we saw in the previous chapter, to deliver the children of Israel

from the excessive and intolerable oppression of the Midianites, and Canaanites, and others. It appears that a vast army of these, who ought to have been extirpated in the execution of a just retribution, had assembled, and threatened the very extinction of the whole of the hosts of Israel. Gideon is raised up, distinguished for his valour, and mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews as eminent for his faith, to lead the children of Israel to battle and to victory against the Midianites. But God says, "You have been so guilty in neglecting the extirpation of a people who were great criminals, and sentenced to death; you, out of a false sympathy and kindness, have been so sinful in not carrying out the sentence that I had pronounced; that even now, if I deliver you it shall be in such a way that you shall get no credit, but I shall take all the glory, whilst the Midianites meet with that retribution which their sins have provoked." And therefore God says to Gideon, "The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands." Why? Because if Israel conquered, and conquered by their own prowess, and dispersed the Midianites by their own valour, they would just begin the olden saying of self-congratulation, giving themselves the praise, instead of being humbled by a sense of their sins, and giving God the glory. And therefore God says to Gideon, "Tell the people, whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early." Now this was an advice that was not only useful then, but useful in other circumstances. Half a dozen of cowardly men in the midst of an army are vastly more damaging than the greatest efforts of their

foes ; and therefore it is a very right thing that no man should enter into an enterprise in itself intrinsically right unless his whole heart and soul be in it. Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing with all the energy you can. If you be a soldier, be one really out and out ; if a sailor, thoroughly so ; if a tradesman, the best you can be. Whatever be the duty that God in his providence assigns, it devolves on you to fulfil it with all the energy of your nature ; and to feel that you glorify God not by preaching truth merely, but by practising the meanest duty, if it be the providential appointment of God himself.

When this intimation was given, out of the thirty-two thousand, twenty-two thousand were only half-and-half men ; vacillating between the two conflicting interests : and they accordingly returned ; and only ten thousand were thoroughly in earnest, devoted to the cause under the banners of which they had voluntarily enlisted. But God, in order still more to humble Gideon, said to him, "Even these ten thousand are too many : and I will put another test, that will thoroughly try their energy, and the enthusiasm that they feel in the cause in which they are embarked. And the arrangement shall be this : when they go to drink water, thirsty and weary with the march, you must notice those that take the water as a dog lappeth." Now this cannot have been exactly as the dog lappeth. We know that when a dog drinks water his tongue is so constructed, and his control over it is such, that he curves it into the shape of a spoon, lifts the water rapidly, and throws it in successive quantities into his mouth. And it is very

singular that the Hebrew verb here for “lappeth” is as spoken the very sound that a dog makes when he laps water—*yalok*. But it is noticed here, that as a human being could not lap water like a dog, it must have been by lifting it in his hand, just as the dog does by his tongue in his mouth; instead of kneeling down and composing himself luxuriously to drink water. And this plan, which was very frequent in ancient times, was called among the heathens, using or drinking from Diogenes’ cup; that is, with the help of the hand. Well now, every one that did so indicated what? That he was in a hurry; that his heart was in his work; that he was anxious to get on; and he would spend as little time as possible in enjoying the cooling stream, which in these countries is far more refreshing than all the wines of the East and West together. But those persons that knelt down, and went deliberately to work as if they were going to dine, and seemed to enjoy water as a luxury, and composed themselves to do so, indicated that they were not so enthusiastically earnest in the work that was assigned them. “And therefore let the men that compose themselves to drink, that seem to think more of their comforts than their duty, let them file off, and return. And pick out all the men that lap water with the hollow of the hand, just as a dog laps water with his tongue.” And the consequence was, that Gideon found three hundred men that seemed to be thoroughly in earnest, and in too great a hurry to spend much time in luxurious enjoyment. “Christianity requires men. David’s royal band of worthies was the type of the forces of the church, all valiant men, and able to encounter with thousands. Doth but a foul word, or

a frown, scare thee from Christ? Doth the loss of a little land or silver disquiet thee? Doth but the sight of the Midianites in the valley strike thee? Home then, home to the world! thou art not for the conquering band of Christ. If thou canst not resolve to follow him through infamy, prisons, racks, gibbets, flames, depart to thine house, and save thy life to thy loss."—*Bp. Hall.*

These three hundred were quite sufficient for all the purposes that he had in view. Now, you can see how all this was fitted to humble Israel, by teaching them, in the first place, how many cowards were in the army, how many half-hearted men were even on the right side; and how few could be depended upon as thoroughly earnest and devoted followers of the Lord God of Israel; and, secondly, it taught them that if the victory should be gained, it would be gained "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

Then, in order to encourage Gideon,—who no doubt began to be afraid, when he found that the camels of the Midianites were countless as the sands by the sea-shore, and that the Midianite battalions were spread over the hills and valleys like grasshoppers upon the green grass; and when he recollected that he had only three hundred men, though men thoroughly in earnest, he might be depressed, and fear that victory was impossible, and shrink even from making the attempt;—God sends him on an errand, which was calculated by the result to strengthen and encourage him for his great work. He says, "Go down and listen; go by stealth; you must take care to escape the outposts and sentries; go by stealth, and see if you

can hear any whisper in the camp of the Midianites, stretched out upon hill and valley." Gideon went, and he heard what was not very complimentary to himself. He overheard the soldiers speaking in their tents, and heard two of them say, what was certainly not very complimentary, likening him not to wheaten bread, but to a barley cake; but what was more encouraging to him as the barley-cake leader of the three hundred men, the barley cake tumbling into a tent overturned it. This was the dream of the Midianite soldier. So Gideon inferred that, falling upon the hosts of Midian, however unlikely, or however in himself intrinsically unable, he would be successful in discomfiting all their hosts. Gideon returned humbled that no higher estimate was formed of his own prowess, but encouraged, by what he believed to be a true dream and a true interpretation, that he should be successful in that enterprise which God had committed to his hands.

Well, the plan that was agreed upon seemed a very absurd one; and yet one can see that there was a great deal of probability in it, apart from the fact, that God was to take the glory to himself, and that therefore he meant designedly that the victory should be gained by the humblest instruments, by the most un-military preparation, by the most unscientific steps,—viewed as tactics, they would be laughed at by every soldier in the world. He resolved that the victory should be gained by trumpets, and pitchers, and lights; and that Gideon, and even his choicest three hundred warriors, should come home very humble; and, having very humble thoughts of their own selves, be more than ever devoted to Him who can conquer by few or by

many. And yet, when we look at the stratagem, we can see something like the elements of success in it. The idea was to make the Midianites believe that an overwhelming force was rushing down upon them; the sudden bursting forth of three hundred lights in all directions about them; the sudden crash of pitchers; the reverberating shout of the three hundred, unexpectedly, in the depth of the night, when the Midianites seem to have committed themselves, in overconfidence, to sleep and apathy, coming upon them suddenly, was fitted to create a panic; and if you can only create a panic in the midst of some hundred men in a battalion, the probability is that it will spread; for a panic is always contagious. In a crowded building, a crowded church, or a crowded room of any sort, let one or two persons get frightened, and the panic spreads with contagious speed from end to end, and over all. The same result occurs in an army; let a company begin to run, and let them shout that there is some danger, or some unexpected peril, and the panic spreads, and all soon take to their heels. So here the stratagem succeeded; the Midianites thought a mighty host was rushing upon them with overwhelming and resistless fury; and they instantly made the best of their way each to his own place, in order to escape what they believed to be inevitable slaughter.

Now, there is another lesson we gather from this. It has sometimes been said, that what are called stratagems in war, are inconsistent with Christian principle; and certainly, at first blush, it does look as if an attempt to deceive an enemy, and make him believe that you are strong when you are weak; or to

make him believe that you are going to attack one part when you are really going to attack another—some have thought that this is inconsistent with Christian duty. But here plainly is a stratagem sanctioned by God himself, and ordered by God himself. For what was this stratagem? To make the Midianites believe that instead of three hundred there were some thirty or forty thousand; and to make them believe that if they did not run they would be sure to be cut to pieces: when the fact was, there were only three hundred; and, if the Midianites had stood to their posts, the three hundred would have been, humanly speaking, extirpated. Here, then, are military tactics sustained by a precedent, that no man can doubt the authorship of. And, whilst all that is false, all that is deceptive, all that is lying, in the transactions of this world is to be forbidden and reprobated; yet it does seem, by universal consent, it does seem from such a precedent as this, that stratagem in war is not sinful; and, therefore, that the soldier may engage in war, and take a part in these stratagems; and, if he is found fault with for it, he can quote the instance of Gideon and the three hundred brave men who followed a strategic course consecrated by God.

In verse 26 we read that they *brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon*. (Oreb means a raven, and Zeeb a wolf.) “It was anciently, and is still an almost universal custom with eastern nations, to take off the heads of opposing chiefs and bring them to the victorious general. It is a sort of trophy, and has been regarded as such, at one time or other, in nearly all nations. David cut off the head of Goliath, probably intending to bring it to Saul; and the head

of Saul himself was cut off by the Philistines, and sent by them to their own country. At present the heads of conquered chiefs and commanders are transmitted to Constantinople from the most distant parts of the Turkish empire, to be laid at the feet of the Sultan, and then to decorate his palace gates. It is, however, to be presumed that the sentiments of a more refined civilisation, and the silently meliorating influences of Christianity, will, ere long, banish all traces of such atrocious barbarity from the earth. From the foregoing interesting narrative respecting Gideon and his wonderful deliverance, we may learn, (1.) To undertake nothing in our own strength. (2.) To draw back from nothing to which we are called. (3.) To doubt of nothing wherein God promises his aid. (4.) To take the glory of nothing which God does by us."

The whole of this history is, in the first place, a faithful narrative of facts, and so far similar to any uninspired history. It has, however, the distinguishing peculiarity of recording these facts, not by a fallible, but by an inspired pen. Nothing is exaggerated—nothing left out—nothing unfairly set forth. In addition to this, it discloses the inner springs and ultimate issues of all, and the presence and controlling power of Him who makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and the very sins and errors of his people to subserve His great and glorious ends. We see God in the affairs of men, and the greatest and wisest and best were instruments in His hand, unconsciously accomplishing His grand designs while looking no higher than their own interests, and seeking nothing beyond their own ends. It is this fact

that humbles man in the very dust, and gives the glory and honour to Him to whom alone it is due. Here is history the visible product of revealed causes. Here we see its origin, its action and its results, and the influence that checks or impels or arrests as may be most expedient.

GIDEON'S CAREER AND DEATH.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EPHRAIMITES. GIDEON'S MILD REPLY. FAINT, BUT PURSUING. THE SUCCOTHITE TIME-SERVERS. GIDEON'S HOPE OF VICTORY. HIS CHASTISEMENT OF TIME-SERVERS. GIDEON IS OFFERED THE THRONE. HIS NOBLE REPLY. HIS ONE GREAT ERROR.

In the previous chapter, we are told that Gideon sent messengers throughout all Mount Ephraim, that is, to the tribes of Ephraim, asking them to come down against the Midianites; and the children of Ephraim gathered together, and took the waters, and intercepted the passage of the enemy across the Jordan, and slew two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb. But when Gideon had triumphed over all the Midianites, the children of Ephraim, very brave after the victory was gained, who had played the recreant and the coward before the battle was begun, came forward, like all disappointed cowards, felt suddenly brave, and said: "Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply." They conveniently forgot that they were called, and invited, and pressed to go; and besides, it was their duty to go, called or not; and if Gideon had not called them, they had a commission from Gideon's

Lord to extirpate the guilty races that then peopled Canaan. Now, the spirit that Gideon showed on this occasion was most exemplary. Instead of saying, "You knew your duty," or, "If I have been successful by God's blessing, why should you find fault with me for having done my duty, because you have failed to do yours?"—which would have exasperated and irritated their temper; he recollected the Divine thought, if not the Divine words, "A soft answer turneth away wrath;" and therefore he answers these quarrelsome, cowardly children of Ephraim, "Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer?" That is, You, the Ephraimites, intercepted their passage at the Jordan; you slew Oreb and Zeeb,—not a very great exploit, but it was the only one they had done; and therefore, to pacify and comfort them, and smoothe down their temper, he says to them, "The gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim,—that is, the little that you did,—was in its place, and in its measure, and at the time so important, that it was really better than the whole vintage of Abi-ezer." In other words, he complimented them as far as truth would admit; instead of blaming what they had not done, he paid them a kind and Christian compliment for what they had attempted to do. Then he tells them that God delivered these princes into their hands: "And what was I able to do in comparison of you?" He took no praise to himself, boasted nothing of his exploits; praised them to the utmost: "And their anger was abated toward him when he had said that." Now, after all, this is the true way of governing mankind. The fault-finding system does not answer, the scolding system

does not do much good ; it is a kind word, not unfaithful because kind, spoken in season, in a Christian temper, from an affectionate heart, that will always be received most readily, and produce the most subduing, sanctifying, and blessed effects. Bush observes : —“ A striking instance this, of the ‘ charity which vaunteth not itself, which seeketh not her own.’ His conduct naturally leads to the remark, (1.) That the only way to appease unreasonable wrath is by curbing, in the spirit of meekness and forbearance, the outbreak of a kindred passion in themselves. ‘ Yielding pacifieth great offences.’ (2.) True humility not only sheds a double lustre over all our gifts, graces, and attainments, but is a disposition tending no less to the preservation of our own happiness, than to the conciliation of those who are offended at us ; for if once willing to forego the honour to which we are entitled, it will appear a small thing to us to be censured without a cause ; seeing that such censures only reduce us to the place which we were previously, in our own minds, disposed to occupy. And it will almost invariably be found true, that as men are ready to hate those who arrogate honour to themselves, so will they be more easily reconciled to those who are humble and unassuming.”

After this Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and three hundred men that were with him, faint with the toils and exertions they had gone through, and the distance they had marched ; but determined not to give up as long as they had a particle of strength left to fulfil their great mission, and therefore still pursuing. But being faint, he asked, what was natural, of the men of Succoth a few loaves

of bread ; and he assigned the reason : “ We are faint, and we are pursuing after your enemies as well as ours ; and if, therefore, you have the compassion of the human, if you have the feeling of patriots, if you pity men that are hungry and faint, and if you desire to have your country rid of its tormentors and its troublers, you will give us a little food.” But what did they answer ? Just like the men of Ephraim : they said, “ Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army ? ” That is, We are not sure that you will conquer ; and therefore they played the part of people who watch the current, see which way the wind blows, and in what direction the stream runs ; ready to join with the strongest, and to cast in their lots with the most fortunate,—unhappily a feature not strange to humanity still. And therefore they said, “ We will wait : if you conquer Zebah and Zalmunna, our enemies and yours, then we will do anything you like to tell us ; but if they conquer you, then we will be quit of all connexion with you as quickly as possible, and join the conquering party. And meantime we will not commit ourselves to either side, but we will hang and oscillate between ; watch which gets uppermost, and fall in with the conquering party,”—a spirit ineffably mean, unprincipled, and in the long run not the spirit, or the temper, or the policy which God blesses. You will always find that the man who, having seen what is duty, and ascertained where right is, falls in with what his conscience prescribes, is in the long run, and even in this world, most blessed and prospered, always most happy ; while those people who are always feeling the pulse of public opinion

before they form theirs, and trying to ascertain who are most numerous, and strongest, and ready to fall in with that side, and throw in their lots with that party, never have the happiness that arises from a decided conviction; they never have their eyes single, and therefore their bodies are never full of light. Their whole career is zigzag, a sort of escape through society, frightened to offend here, anxious to please there; instead of going right onward, saying, "This is right and dutiful before God, and I am sure it will be most expedient in the sight of man."

"Gideon said unto the men of Penuel, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower." What does that mean? It is, "I shall gain the victory, I know I shall; and when I come again, that tower, which you are now calculating upon as a defence and a refuge from the incensed party, I will batter down and level with the ground."

Now, accordingly, we read that "Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, all that were left of the hosts of the children of the east; for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword. And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents, and smote the host; for the host was secure. And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host." And he caught a young man belonging to the men of Succoth, who would not help him, who would not give bread to the hungry, and who were trusting to their tower to give them shelter; and he inquired of him, and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even threescore

and seventeen men. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary? And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them," that is, by penal severity, by great punishment, he taught them a better lesson than they had ever learned before.

"He made them sensible of their crime and folly; in other words, he punished them by putting them to death by this mode of torture. This is to be inferred from the fact that their offence was the same as that of the men of Penuel, whom he certainly did put to death. The probability is that their naked bodies were laid in the midst of a heap of thorns, briers, and prickly brush, and then threshing sledges or other heavy implements of husbandry were drawn over them. In northern nations, where the body is completely covered, the idea of such punishments with thorns on the naked person, seems a far-fetched device; but in the East, where the clothing leaves much more of the person exposed, and where, in consequence, men are continually lacerating their skins in passing through thickets, &c., the idea of such laceration is always kept present, either by the actual experience of suffering, or by the constant observation of it. Hence tearing the flesh with thorns comes to be a familiar idea of penal infliction, and, as such, is popularly mentioned as among the punishments which evil-doers deserve, or will obtain, not only in this life, but in the life to come. The punishment, it must be acknowledged, was severe, but the provocation was

great. Considered as an act of ingratitude and inhumanity only, it was exceedingly sinful; for what could be more base than to refuse a meal to those who had, at the peril of their own lives, delivered the whole nation from the yoke of Midian; and were now, though only three hundred in number, following the remaining fugitives, fifty times as numerous as themselves, in order to extirpate them entirely? Had they been mere strangers and travellers in distress, their request would have been reasonable, and a refusal barbarous; but considering that they were their own countrymen, and fighting their country's battles under the special calling and direction of Heaven, it was treason of the blackest dye; it was the very way to prevent the execution of the Divine purposes, and if God had not miraculously renewed the strength of the victors, this refusal of food to them would have done more to vanquish them than all the hosts of Midian had been able to effect. But they added insult to injury; they endeavoured to weaken his hands by deriding the vanity of his attempts; they answered him in a tone of bantering and scorn, and thus poured contempt upon a cause which, being of God, was thereby rendered sacred. So that, taking all things into view, it cannot be questioned that Gideon did right in making a fearful example of such wicked traitors. The whole of this remarkable transaction tends to inspire us with confidence in God, and to encourage our exertions in his cause. But there are two lessons especially which we shall do well to learn from it; (1,) to prosecute our spiritual warfare under all discouragements ourselves; and (2,) to be careful to put no discouragements in

the way of others. God is indignant with those who would weaken the hands of his people. His command is, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; say unto them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; your God will come and help you."

"Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king;" that is, in majesty, in dignity, in appearance. "And he said, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother." That is very emphatic. Among the Jews polygamy prevailed: it was suffered for a long time, for the hardness of their hearts. Each wife was married to the man; it was therefore legal and justifiable, as such marriages were suffered then, though directly and emphatically forbidden now, as it was indeed forbidden at the first. And therefore the expression, "The sons of my mother," means not my brothers, the children of my father; but my brothers who were the children of that one of the wives who was my mother. He then had these men who had acted this part slain before him.

And when the children of Israel saw now Gideon all prosperity, and power, and fame, they instantly asked him to reign over them; but he said, No, he would do no such thing. They were living under a theocracy; God was their king; no man might assume to be king. It was the era of the Judges, not yet the dynasty of the Kings. "The Lord himself shall rule over you."

Then Gideon, it seems, elevated by his victories,

asked them to give him the spoils they had gathered ; the golden ear-rings, and the bracelets, and the chains, and the purple raiment, and with these he made what is here called an ephod ; an ornament like a coat, without sleeves, worn by the high-priest, an inferior one being worn by the ordinary priests. The robe on the high-priest had also a breastplate of precious stones, called the Urim and the Thummim, or the lights and perfections, from which God revealed his mind. What Gideon meant by putting on this robe, or having such a robe made for him, it is difficult to ascertain. He probably forgot himself ; thought, as he had been a successful general, he was entitled to take the sacredness of the priest as well as the dignity of the ruler ; and making these things into a priestly robe, he led the people away from the true place appointed for solemn worship. And they came up to where he was ; and the consequence was that Israel, even by the unhappy deed of their successful ruler, plunged into their olden sin of idolatry and apostasy from God ; forgot even Gideon himself in the long run, and fell into all the ways of Baalim and Baal-berith, as their fathers had done before them.

We thus see how the greatest men, whose lives are recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures, had great defects. Gideon's whole career was prosperity, splendour, power increasing every day ; those that opposed him fleeing before him, and his own people anxious even to make him a king : but just at that moment his heart became proud, he forgot God, who was his strength, and whose word was his security. He began to think himself greater than he was, and more of himself than he ought to think ; stepped into

the priest's office, then most rigidly forbidden, and fell, even Gideon, the successful general; and the people he had rescued from destruction, alas, alas! he was the unhappy instrument of leading into apostasy from God, and idolatry. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

On the two concluding verses of this chapter we have simply to remark: (1.) That they who are kept from evil, not so much by their own choice as by the restraint of others, will, like the slackened bow, start aside the moment the string is loosed. (2.) We are not to wonder if they are ungrateful to us, who show themselves destitute of all gratitude towards God.

WANTED A KING.

CHAPTER IX.

HISTORY. ABIMELECH. HIS INSINUATIONS. THE DANGEROUS CLASSES. JOTHAM, HIS ESCAPE. HIS PARABLE, WANTED A KING. WISE REFUSALS OF A CROWN. THE OLIVE. THE VINE. ACCEPTANCE BY THE BRAMBLE. RESULTS. RETRIBUTION.

WE have, in the chapter we have read, unhappily not an only chapter of the kind in the history of mankind. I fear that each age, more or less correctly, repeats the facts and reflects the incidents recorded here. And the reason why cruelties the most revolting, ambition the most consuming, and passions that ought to be repressed and crushed, are exhibited and set forth in the clear light of this blessed book, is that you may learn there what man is when left to himself; what sin hath done; and what you and I should be if it were not for the grace of God.

The first incident recorded in this chapter is the conspiracy of Abimelech. You will recollect the explanation I gave previously in the case of Gideon, where he describes his brethren as being the sons of his mother. And we read here that Gideon appealed to his mother's brethren, saying, "I am your bone and your flesh." Polygamy existed then; was suffered, and connived at, but not sanctioned and approved, by God. And Abimelech was the son of one mother,

along with other brothers ; and to these he speaks, and to the house of his mother's father, saying, " Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten, reign over you, or that one reign over you ? remember also, that I am your bone and your flesh." Would it be better that you should have a republic with seventy masters, tyrannizing over you ; or would you not rather prefer a despotism ; and that despotism a near and dear relative, who will not tyrannize over you, but teach you like a teacher, guide you as a parent ; so that you shall feel his sceptre and his sway to be happiness and peace ? Now these were the subtle and insinuating suggestions of a bad, proud man, who longed for power, and was not very scrupulous about the steps that he took in order to reach and to hold fast that power. Abimelech therefore determined upon murder ; and murder the more atrocious because those whom he slew were closely connected with himself ; and also ambition, that aspired to all the honours and absolutism of a throne.

We have in this incident the first indication of a savage custom, which is not yet extinct in Asia, and under which, a new king deems it a measure of policy to put to death his brothers, from a fear that their ambition, or the favour of the people towards them, might lead them to form designs against his dignity or life. Thus, the commencement of a new reign is signalized by the same horrible transaction as that of which we here read. In Persia, where the same principle operates, the new monarchs have rather sought to secure their own safety by putting out the eyes of

their brothers and others from whom they might entertain apprehensions. Of the precise manner in which the murder was effected, we are left in ignorance. It was a common mode of capital punishment in ancient times, to precipitate culprits from an eminence upon a rock or stone; and to this our Saviour seems to allude, Matt. xxi. 44.

He selected for this wicked, ambitious, and murderous purpose persons that are to be had in every great city; the very offscouring and the worst of what are called the dangerous classes; made dangerous because we neglect our duties; for there would be fewer dangerous elements beneath if there were only more dutiful brothers to sympathise with the ignorant, and to try to mitigate and relieve their ignorance. He selected a crowd of what are called the dangerous classes; persons who had nothing to lose by a revolution, and had the chance of gaining something. Whenever there is a class in society who have nothing to lose by turning things upside down, then in proportion as that class increases does the peril of a country increase also. It is necessary for the safety of the higher strata that they should look after the lower; and whenever two classes in society are completely severed, they become like the negative and positive poles in electricity; a connexion is formed, and a convulsion ensues, and we must be thankful if it does not end in revolution also. Well now, Abimelech instantly went, and in the first place paved his pathway to a throne by the murder of all the children of his mother; that is, his own half-brothers; with the exception of one Jotham, who hid himself, and escaped the murderous pursuit of this ambitious tyrant. The

moment that Jotham escaped, understanding well what sort of a man had now seized the reins, and what sort of a despotism he would wield over all that came under his power, "he went and stood upon Mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and said unto the men of Shechem," who were now to be laid under this despotic yoke, "Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you." And the way that he took to command their attention was to speak to them in an apologue or a parable. This is one of the earliest parables, if not the earliest; it is also one of the most beautiful. There is nothing in a parable inconsistent with truth. You may say it is all nonsense that a fig-tree should speak, or a vine should talk. But it is not asserted here as an absolute truth that the vine, and the fig-tree, and the bramble, spoke; but the imagery is employed; and it is assumed that they became vocal for the occasion—merely assumed; and so transparent is this, that anybody with common sense can see through it, and that it conveys a most important lesson. Now in Eastern countries we know that the apologue and parable are extremely popular, and I suspect in Western countries too; for in proportion as speaking becomes dramatic, in the same proportion it becomes interesting; what is abstract and dry loses the attention of the people; but what is clothed in a dramatic form, or is made to look living, that instantly seizes on their sympathies, and you convey and insinuate through the imagery lessons that last, and do great practical and wide-spread good. Well then, Jotham says, "The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them." They could not get on on a dead level; they must have a government;

and it generally turns out, so completely is monarchy, such a monarchy as we have, inwrought into human nature, that even a republic cannot get on as a republic—it must make a king for four years ; and at the close of the four years make another king. It is the very law of government, of subordination, of authority ; and wherever it exists truly it is exercised mildly ; there nations, provided they be otherwise Christian and moral nations, rise to a culminating greatness and prosperity. Well, the trees said, “ We want a king ; come thou now,” addressing the olive-tree, “ and reign over us.” But just notice the good sense of the olive. The olive-tree said, “ I know the perils of a throne ; I know that there are thorns about the brow that wears the brightest diadem ; I know that there are cares mingled with the splendour, and troubles nestling in the heart of the most beloved and most popular monarch in the wide world ; and I therefore should not like, unless it should be thrust upon me as a stern duty, to leave the quiet usefulness of private life, where my oil is so appreciated and my influence so good, for the bright, conspicuous, and prominent position of a royal one ; it may be envied by some, hated by others ; and because so elevated, so liable to perils and dangers on the right hand and on the left.”

Then they turned round to the fig-tree, and said, “ Come thou, and reign over us.” But then it said naturally, “ Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees ? Should I lay aside what I have as my attribute and my function by God’s commission, and take upon me a position that I think I have no right to, and that I am not called to in the providence of God ?”

Then they said to the vine, "Will you come?" The vine said, "Should I leave my wine, which is poured out in sacrifice to God, and which is drunk by man, as refreshment and strength, and go and be promoted over the other trees?" That is, if a man has good sense, he will not be tempted to leave his sphere easily. If it is said to a presbyter, "Come and be a bishop;" or to another, "Come you and be a noble;" or to another, "Come you and be a king;" you will say, if you are wise, "Let me remain where God in his providence has placed me;" for it will be always found that he who thrusts himself into prominence, instead of waiting to be drawn into it in the good providence of God, will have no reason in the long run to rejoice in the step he has taken.

Then they came to the bramble—and this lets out the character of Abimelech, and shows how worthless men have always the highest conceit of themselves; you never find a man of real talent think very highly of his intellect; you never find a real Christian have a high opinion of himself. But you will find men that have very little Christianity save the name, and very little intellect though plenty of pretence, have wondrously high conceit of themselves. When the choice fig-tree, when the precious vine, when the valuable olive—all the very aristocracy and flower of the forest—decline the honour, knowing better, and probably thinking they were neither fit nor meant to wield it; this bramble, with nothing but thorns, only fit for the flame, no sooner heard that there was a chance of getting on than it instantly thrust forward and said, "I am just the very best tree in the forest; and you could not have done better than turn aside from the worth-

less olive, the useless vine, and the paltry fig-tree, which are really of no value at all; and take me to be your king; and you will see what a happy people you will be, and what a wise government I will wield over you." And not satisfied with that, the bramble said, "Put your trust in my shadow; I will protect you; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon;" if you refuse, you will feel the consequences of it. "Now therefore," says Jotham, "if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king; and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands; for my father fought for you"—what a beautiful appeal! you ought to have done well, whether you have done it or not;—"and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hands of Midian; and ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons. If ye have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal; if all this be just what you ought to have done, and with his house; then I wish you much joy of Abimelech; then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him rejoice in you. But if you have done what is wicked, sinful, unprovoked, and uncalled-for; then you may depend upon it that fire will come out from Abimelech; you will have to lament in tears and blood the day when you made such a desperate and unhallowed choice; and you will see that he who lays the foundations of his throne in blood can never prosper if there be a God in heaven, if there be a law of righteousness operating on earth."

Mr. Roberts remarks that "The people of the East are exceedingly addicted to apologues, and use them to

convey instruction or reproof, which with them could scarcely be done so well in any other way. Has a man been told a secret, he says, in repeating it, for instance, 'A tree told me this morning, that Kandan offered a large bribe to the Modeliar, to get Muttoo turned out of his situation.' Does a man of low caste wish to unite his son in marriage to the daughter of one who is high, the latter will say, 'Have you heard that the pumpkin wants to be married to the plantain-tree?' Is a wife sterile, 'The cocoa-nut tree in Vira-ver's garden does not bear any fruit.' Has a woman had children by improper intercourse, it is said of her husband's garden, 'Ah, the palmyra-trees are now giving cocoa-nuts.' Has a man given his daughter in marriage to another who uses her unkindly, he says, 'I have planted the sugar-cane by the side of the *margossa* (bitter) tree.' A short fable, together with its 'moral,' is more easily remembered than a laboured argument, or the same truth expressed in abstract terms, and hence it is that we find this vehicle of instruction so frequently employed in the Scriptures. Fables are there exemplified in all their various uses, whether to reprove kings, to admonish multitudes, or to instruct disciples. Our Lord himself did not disdain to employ them. They are all perfect of their kind; nearly all of them are very short; and in most instances, as in that now before us, the application is made by the speaker. The general moral of Jotham's parable is, (1.) That weak and worthless men are ever forward to thrust themselves into power, while the wise and good are more prone to decline it. (2.) That they who unduly affect honour, and they who unjustly confer it, will prove sources of misery to each other.

Both these points are most strikingly illustrated in the present fable, as compared with the actual results."

Then Jotham ran away and fled, when he had given the lesson. And we read that God sent, or it may be permitted,—for God uses men's sins as chastisements and punishments of them:—"God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; that the cruelty done to his brethren might come, and the blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother." The laws that connect sin and punishment are far stronger than the laws that govern the physical world. For instance, the law that fire shall burn has been reversed; and the three Hebrew youths have walked amid the flames without a hair of their heads being singed. The law that makes a heavy body sink in water has been reversed; for Jesus has walked upon the stormy waves. The law that makes the body decay in the grave has been arrested; and the dead have come forth. So that we see the laws of the physical world have been arrested, reversed, modified. But the law that connects sin with penalty, holiness with happiness, never has been, never can be, and never will be reversed; either here or hereafter the sinner's sin will find him out.

Well, we find that when this took place "Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem; and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him." You observe they were not a true people; they lifted up one; they were just as ready to put him down, if they got one who suited their passions and their prejudices better to take his place. And they went out, gathered their vineyards; and

then went into the house of their heathen and idol god; and Abimelech, who rose to his throne amid shouts, hosannahs, and plaudits, very soon after, in the house and temple of the idol god, is cursed and denounced. And Gaal the son of Ebed—and mark how he goes on under the influence of the wicked spirit by which he is inspired; how subtle, how insinuating!—he gets this person Abimelech first denounced in his place of worship—his place of worship was an idol temple; when he got him denounced there he comes in, and he says with great plausibility, “Who is this Abimelech, that has been reigning over us all along? What are his antecedents? What is his history? Can you tell me anything about him? and who is Shechem, this son of Gideon, that we should serve him? Is not he the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem; for why should we serve him?” And then he said, with all the stimulating appliances to the passions of an ignorant mob, “Would to God this people were under my hand! What a happy people they would be, instead of being under Abimelech! then would I remove Abimelech.” And then, gathering courage as he grew in the passions of the mob, he called out to Abimelech, “Increase thine army, and come out. And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren be come to Shechem; and behold, they fortify the city against thee. Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that are with thee, and lie in wait in the field; and it shall be, that in the morning, as soon as the sun

is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city." Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were with him, and laid wait against Shechem in four companies. "And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city; and Abimelech rose up, and the people that were with him, from lying in wait." And then Abimelech overcomes them and destroys the city, and sows the whole city, as it is here called, with salt; that is a symbol of complete desolation. And then he took branches, and was guilty of a piece of Algerine cruelty the most odious, unsanctioned by the highest and noblest warfare; he piled them against the tower in which the people were, and set fire to the branches; and thus suffocated if not burned both men and women. And he tried the same thing on a second tower; and in doing so a woman cast down a millstone upon Abimelech; it means strictly "and brake his skull." "*A piece of a millstone*. Literally, '*a piece of a chariot-wheel*,' but elsewhere applied to *upper-millstones*. In nearly all the copies of the English Bible printed in England, the verb appears in the past tense, 'brake,' whereas in all or nearly all the American editions the word is 'break,' as in the text above. The former reading is certainly the correct one. The error in our editions has arisen from a misapprehension of the true meaning of the phrase 'all to.' According to the present use of language, this would seem rather to express *intention* than the *result* of action, but it really expresses the latter. 'All to,' in many of the old English writers, means 'altogether,' 'entirely,' or as Johnson says, is used 'as a particle of mere enforcement;' and so doubtless it is used here; q. d. 'she

entirely or utterly brake his skull.' Thus in Holland's translation of Pliny, (A.D. 1601,) 'As for him that hath let flie a dart at him (the lion), and yet missed his marke and done no hurt, if hee chance to catch him, he *all to* shaketh, tosseth, and turneth him, lying along at his feet, but doth him no harme at all besides.' Not understanding this, many copies of the common version have changed it to indicate *intention*, by substituting 'break' for 'brake.'"—*Bush*.

Well, he had that consuming pride, that same passion that had inspired him from the beginning, that he wished it not to be recorded that he had died by a woman's hand, which was unworthy, as he thought, of a warrior of his standing, dignity, and success; and therefore he bade a young man kill him, which he did. But it is recorded in this very book that he died by the hand of a woman.

Then the moral lesson is given: "Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren; and all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal."

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS.

CHAPTER X.

RECAPITULATION. EVILS OF FALSE PITY. RANK AND WEALTH
AND WHITE ASSES. SUCCESSION OF JUDGES. TWO MASTERS.
OUR IDOL. SIN AND SUFFERING. SENSE OF SIN, ETC.

IN the previous chapter we read of the conspiracy of Abimelech, his murder of his brethren, his ascending the throne, and his exercising all the tyranny of a ruthless despot over the oppressed children of Israel. Jotham, one of the brethren who had escaped, by a parable the most beautiful and expressive, rebuked the men of Shechem, and foretold their approaching ruin, unless they should be able, by God's blessing on their strenuous efforts, to anticipate and arrest it. Abimelech, overcoming those that were opposed to him, sowed the city with salt, and burned the holds of their gods. We read finally of the fulfilment of what has been always true, that he that sows the east wind shall reap the whirlwind, and that a throne founded in blood will not prove strong, secure, or lasting. This despot, who rose to ascendancy by bribery, by slaughter, by fratricide, at last fell by an ignominious death, accidentally, as the world would call it, by a piece of stone thrown from a house striking and breaking his skull. Thus

the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads.

Let us recollect, what it is important to remember in reading this book, that the great mission of the Israelites was to maintain in all its purity their own holy faith, and to exterminate those condemned felons the Canaanites, who had pre-occupied the land,—an extirpation I explained before ; not on account of personal revenge, but the execution of a solemn judicial sentence which God pronounced, and of which these judges or dictators were simply the executioners. Some of these officers, out of false kindness and equally false compassion, spared those they ought to have extirpated. The consequence was that those they spared in human compassion, but in disregard of divine obligation, were their tormentors, thorns in their sides, all the time they were in the land of Canaan : and if they had only tormented them in that way it would not have been so bad. But they also seduced them to heathenism, intermarried with them ; and the consequence was that God's people, who were set apart as a peculiar people, to be specimens of what truth could do by its light and what love could do by its transforming power, sunk into the terrible apostasy and idolatry which are recorded in this and succeeding chapters.

We find in this chapter that Tola was raised to be a judge after the death of Abimelech. After him arose Jair, who had thirty sons, (grandsons as well as sons being included in that word ;) who rode on thirty ass colts, a mark of dignity in those days indicative of persons possessed of superior wealth. All wealth is so by contrast : when the ordinary level of

society comes to have so much per annum of an average income, then wealth means a very large income; but when the average mass were excessively poor, then it was wealth to have a little above the level of the multitude, and to have thirty ass colts for these thirty young men to ride on.

Jair died, and was buried. Nothing is recorded either to his credit or to his honour. But now we read that the children of Israel again did evil, thinking God did not see them, but, as it is here stated, in the sight of the Lord. And they served Baalim and Ashtaroth; that is, the gods of Syria and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the Lord, and served not him. There is a great law ever found to be fact, that no man can serve two masters; in religious things one or other must have the ascendancy. No man can believe in tradition and in Scripture, and accept both as on the same level; one or other will obtain the ascendancy. No man can serve Mammon and serve God, or serve the world and serve God; one or other will predominate, and assert absolute and exclusive supremacy. And it is a great law of God's own economy, that in the human heart there is only room for one being, and God must have the whole of it, or he will have none.

Any one may determine who is his god by just ascertaining, "What is it I live chiefly for? What is it I live supremely for? What is my governing hope, my predominating motive, my ever-present and ever-pursued aim, aspiration, and desire?" Whatever that is, it is in its supremacy for all practical purposes your god. It is not true that there is no idolatry

now. Idolatry has only changed its form from the gross, vulgar, carved images of the Philistines and the gods of Syria, into the shape of the gold sovereign, or into the shape of politics, of party, of literature, or of science. I do not say that these things ought not to have a place; but what the Bible requires is, that love to God shall have the supreme place in the human heart.

When they thus sinned, God punished them. They began to be sore distressed; trouble and affliction followed them. That is just as true still as it was under a theocracy; no man sins without suffering for it even in this world. I do not say the suffering is expiatory; far from it. It may be chastisement; it may be wrath; but it is never expiatory. ' But it is a law, just as sure as rising and setting suns, that sin is suffering, as sound has its echo, as light has its shadow; and true holiness, and righteousness, and justice, and temperance, and patience, and meekness, and brotherly kindness, are happiness and peace. But it is a blessed truth, that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And these Israelites knew, "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." They therefore said, "We have sinned against thee: first, in that we have forsaken thee; and second, that we have given our idolatrous homage to Baal." But God, to try and test them, said, "Ye cried unto me, and I delivered you out of the hand of these enemies once. But you have forgotten that; you have now forsaken me; you have served other gods. Wherefore, if you persist in this any longer, I will deliver you no more. And if you wish to show

the vanity and worthlessness of your trust, cry to the gods you have chosen ; let them deliver you in your tribulation, and you will see if they are able to do it. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen,—which ye have not served upon compulsion, but which ye have freely and voluntarily chosen. “The Most High does not turn away his ear from their prayers, nor sink them in utter despair ; yet he sends a sharp and upbraiding answer, of which the immediate effect would be to awaken their consciences, and confound them under a sense of their baseness and ingratitude. Many a time they had been delivered, and those very oppressors subdued under them ; yet they had vilely sinned against their own mercies. He therefore refers them for help to the gods whom they had served, to rebuke their folly and convince them of the weakness of these lying vanities. Yet the emphatic declaration, ‘I will deliver you no more,’ is to be understood conditionally, in case their idols were kept among them ; for the Divine threatenings always imply a reserve of mercy to the truly penitent. (1.) If God appears to frown upon the returning sinner, let him not despair ; it is no more than his desert, indeed, if he be utterly rejected ; but with the Lord there is mercy and forgiveness, and a heart of overwhelming kindness is sometimes temporarily concealed by an aspect of wrath. (2.) When we are brought to a real sense of our sins, we shall see the vanity and insufficiency of those things to make us either safe or happy, in which we formerly trusted.” (*Bush.*) But the children of Israel had the good sense, or shall I not rather say, had the grace? to say, “We have sinned ; do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. We

would rather fall into the hands of God than into the hands of man: deliver us only, we pray thee, this day." And then they showed they were in earnest this time; for the first time when they confessed, they confessed the sin, deplored the suffering, but did not begin to put it away; but this time they confessed the sin, deplored the suffering, and showed they were in earnest by putting away the strange gods from among them, and serving the Lord. And it is stated, in exquisitely tender language, "The Lord was grieved for the misery of Israel." What a blessed thought is here! that we have One in the skies who sympathises with us; that there is not a grief in a believer's heart which has not its reflection on the Redeemer's throne; that there is not a sorrow or a groan in a believer's soul that has not its resounding echo in His bosom who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and ever liveth to make intercession for us. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift—a Saviour!

JEPHTHAH'S RECAL.

CHAPTER XI.

JEPHTHAH'S MOTHER. HYPOCRISY. HARD TREATMENT.
FORESIGHT. JEPHTHAH'S REASONING.

THE first remark I have to make on this interesting chapter is, that the mother of Jephthah was not what she is defined here to have been, but strictly and properly an innkeeper, or a hostess. The Hebrew word is translatable into either; and it is reasonable, I think, where there is no just evidence of the worse, to choose the better and the more charitable interpretation. It seems that his mother was a strange woman, very probably one of the Canaanites; and his father, therefore, had been guilty of a great sin in marrying one who was not of the land of Israel.

“The Jewish commentators, for the most part, gave a softening exposition of the term here employed, as if it imported merely a concubine, or a gentile, *i. e.* a foreign or strange woman, not one of the Israelitish race, as she is termed in ver. 2. But without doing violence to its ordinary and most legitimate sense, we know not how to depart from the rendering of the text. At the same time, it is to be observed that our limited knowledge of the actual state of manners

and society in those ancient periods, prevents us from affirming that the word conveys precisely the idea of *public addictedness to degrading vice*, which its modern acceptation imports. It may have indicated a character somewhat less vile and iniquitous, but the ambiguity of the term is not sufficient to cover all disgrace in Jephthah's origin. His extraction, however, whatever it was, was the fault and disgrace of his parents rather than of himself, and a man should not be reproached with the unhappiness of his birth, when his own conduct bespeaks him deserving a more honourable relation.—¶ *Gilead begat Jephthah.* One of the descendants of the Gilead mentioned Numb. xxxii. 1; Josh. xvii. 1, 3, and bearing his name. To what tribe he belonged is not certain, but probably that of Manasseh beyond the Jordan. 1 Chron. vii. 14."—*Bush.*

We then read that Jephthah's brothers resolved to turn him out from his home, that they themselves might take possession of it; not that they were actuated by any good motive, but that they made their zeal for religion and morality a pretext, a hypocritical pretext, for driving out one who shared with them in the heritage of their father, that they might appropriate all the money or property to themselves; men then, as now, often making religion and religious pretensions a mere stalking-horse to their own aggrandisement and ambitious designs.

When Jephthah was turned out, he became a fugitive and wanderer over all the earth, and associated, as might have been expected, with loose men, not particular in distinguishing between their own and other people's property, and became, by his genius, his

skill, his physical and mental energy, their leader and their head. And what else could be expected? If you drive a child from his home, or a young man from his brothers and sisters, he has nowhere to go; you ruin him by the expulsion, and you must expect that he will only go on from worse to worse, till he be removed from the country, or from the world altogether.

But it seems that God had purposes for Jephthah that his brethren did not anticipate; for we find that the children of Ammon, a neighbouring tribe or nationality of Canaanites, were determined to make war with and resist, if not invade, the Israelites. When his brothers saw this, knowing the skill, the talent, the genius,—the military genius,—of their brother, their expelled brother Jephthah, they were obliged to humble themselves so far as to go out and beg of him, for their own sakes, not out of any love to him, but only for their own safety, that he would be good enough to come and be their captain, and lead them to battle against the Ammonites. Jephthah said very naturally, not exhibiting any bad temper or any spirit of revenge, but just letting them know that his eyes were open, and that he understood their motives and ends just as well as they did themselves, "Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now, when ye are in distress?" The elders who represented them were obliged to say, "Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead." Jephthah, who had a great deal of prudence, and good sense, and fore-

sight, felt that as soon as he had helped them to beat the Ammonites they would expel him from the army, just as they had done formerly from his home ; and therefore he stipulated with them, what was very reasonable, “ Well, if I beat the Ammonites and come home again, then what will you do with me? Will you allow me to be your permanent head, or governor, or judge?” according to the phraseology of this book. And they were obliged to give a promise to do so, being too anxious in their present position to do anything he bade them, in order to get his assistance.

JEPHTHAH'S VOW.

CHAPTER XII.

JEPHTHAH was placed as commander of the forces of Israel; and before going to war with the Ammonites, he does what every nation ought to do,—exhaust diplomacy before it draws the sword. It is wonderful what thoroughly good precedents there are found for nations, for armies, for homes, for all ranks and degrees of men, in this most remarkable book. So Jephthah writes one of the most sensible letters that ever was written by the commander of an army, to the commander of the Ammonite forces. He remonstrates, and asks them, “What do you mean? Why do you come to make war against me and my people? What is the matter with you? What have we done that you are come to fight against us?” The king of the children of Ammon forthwith got up a pretext. There was not a word of truth in it; but whenever a man, a king of a powerful country, is bent upon accomplishing some purpose of his own, some scheme of aggrandisement or ambition, it is wonderful how fertile imagination becomes in inventing and devising excuses; till what was an unprovoked aggression comes, in the poor man's mind, to be

regarded as one of the most moral and justifiable steps. When the king of the Ammonites asserted this, Jephthah, who was evidently a master in history, and acquainted with all the dealings of God to the children of Israel, recapitulates the whole story; tells them all that was done; that instead of the Israelites making aggression upon them, they on the contrary had tried to avoid the quarrel; had gone round about, when an ill-tempered, violent, and selfish king would not let them march through his country, and were at the trouble to take a circuitous path in order to avoid him. They had no idea, therefore, of entering into an unprovoked war. The children of Israel had done nothing to provoke this assault, and therefore Jephthah hoped the king of Ammon, on second thoughts, would come to his senses, and would see that his conduct was most unjustifiable; that the war he was commencing was aggressive from beginning to end; and that if he persisted in it he would get the worst of it; for if he would not resile, then he must be taught by harder means than words that he and his must keep within their own bounds, and not invade other people's territory in order to gratify his ambition.

The king of Ammon, however, like many kings and autocrats of other times, would not listen to what he said. Then Jephthah felt he had only one duty to fulfil, as the commander of the hosts of Israel; to go forward in God's strength, and peril all the issues upon the cause that was right and true.

When Jephthah went forth to fight the Ammonites, he made a vow to the Lord, and said: "If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine

hands, then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace"—that is, conqueror—"from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering." The sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, as it is called, has been a subject of very great dispute; but I think you will see the obvious conclusion, when you have heard the grounds on which it rests. I think you must take the translation exactly as it is. It is proposed by one commentator, a very able critic, that verse 31 should be rendered, "Whatsoever shall come forth shall be the Lord's; or I will offer up a burnt-offering." It will either be the Lord's by perpetual dedication, or, if it be suitable for the purpose, I will offer it up for a burnt-offering. The other translation is by Bishop Lowth, one of the most accomplished Hebrew scholars that ever wrote: "Whatsoever cometh forth to meet me shall be the Lord's; and I will offer"—the Hebrew pronoun being susceptible of this—"I will offer to him a burnt-offering;" that is, to the Lord. It is capable of this; and Bishop Lowth thinks that such is the correct rendering. But somehow there is something that does not meet and satisfy one's feelings here; and it does appear to me much fairer, and more in consonance, at the same time,—though high authorities think very differently,—with the Hebrew words to read as it is in our version, "Whatsoever cometh forth to meet me shall be the Lord's; and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering." But what is the reason why men have tried to establish a different translation? What they suppose to be the terrible consequence, namely,

that this father slew and burned his own daughter. But it seems to me that he made this vow rashly, and hastily, without consideration, as better men have done in moments of great excitement, not thinking of the possibility of his own child, or of a human being, coming out to meet him; and then, as we shall see in the sequel of the story, elements came into play which rendered it neither necessary nor possible that he should fulfil the vow as he had literally and strictly laid it down. Painters have celebrated the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, and given a picture, of which engravings are frequent, showing that she was actually sacrificed by her father. I do not believe anything of the sort. There is irresistible evidence that she was neither put to death, nor offered up as a burnt sacrifice. When he regrets meeting her, his language in the 35th verse evidently implies that he did vow just as our translation has given it, and not as Bishop Lowth tries to make out; for what does he say? "Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." He evidently thought that he had no alternative but to destroy his only child, his daughter, who had come forth to congratulate him. And she, with beautiful submission, said, "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord," that is, if thou hast vowed unto the Lord, "do to me according to that which proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon;" that is, the national victory is so transcendent, that I can merge my indi-

vidual suffering in the current of common joy. She said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity." Now, what could be the meaning of this? It would have been, "Bewail the sacrifice that I must undergo," if she understood that she was to be offered up in sacrifice, as the only possible fulfilment of his vow; and unless it meant perpetual celibacy, or sequestration from social life, and especially from married life, I cannot understand the meaning of the words that are here employed.

"It came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father." Now, if he had sacrificed her, there would have been some minute and striking account of so terrible, so unprecedented, so horrible a sacrifice. But instead of that, it is said, "He did with her according to his own vow which he had vowed; and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah, the Gileadite, four days in a year." "He did with her according to his vow." Now, what does this mean? In the first place, he could not have offered her up; the law, the Levitical law, under which Jephthah was—for recollect he lived subsequent to the Mosaic institutes—forbade any one to offer a sacrifice except a priest. Jephthah was a general, he was not a priest; and therefore he could not offer his own daughter, nor even a lamb or a bullock, as a sacrifice. Secondly, no priest of Aaron, no priest of Israel, dared offer up a human sacrifice, for such sacrifices were strictly and rigidly forbidden in the Mosaic economy. Then

who offered her up? Jephthah could not; no layman could; no priest could: who, then, could have offered her up a sacrifice? No one. In the next place, the law among the Jews was this: that if one had vowed to offer up something, and he found afterwards that he ought not to offer it, or if he wished even to change his mind, he could substitute an equivalent, and offer it up. So that, if Jephthah had vowed, as I have said, that he would kill his daughter, and if, when he came to find that his vow must be fulfilled, he had asked any priest or Levite, or any teacher in the land, he would have told him, "Well, Jephthah, if you have made this most rash vow, you can, by the laws of our economy, substitute something as valuable, or something approximating to its preciousness; and by offering up that something substituted for it, you will have done substantially all that you have vowed to do." And then, lastly, the language that "the daughters of Israel went yearly," not to lament, for that is not the Hebrew word; it is strictly—as it is given in the margin, for the marginal translation of the Bible is always the most literal,—“went yearly to talk with the daughter of Jephthah,” or to sympathise, to condole with her; but if she had been offered up a sacrifice, how could they have gone to condole with her, talk with her, and sympathise with her ever afterwards?

The conclusion, therefore, is irresistible that she was condemned to celibacy. Every woman in Israel had the hope and expectation of being the mother of the Messiah. It was a great national hope; and to be childless was to a wife the greatest grief, and to be

doomed to a life of perpetual celibacy was the bitterest punishment that could be inflicted upon a daughter of Israel. She was therefore separated from her friends, from her home ; doomed to a life of perpetual solitude and celibacy. Whether right or wrong, is not stated ; it is simply the fact that irresistibly follows from the reading which I have now submitted.

In order that the reader may learn all that has been said on all sides, I append a very elaborate summary by Bush :—

“Vows were very common under the Mosaic dispensation. They were even encouraged by God himself, in order that his people might have opportunities of manifesting the love that was in their hearts by offerings that were not enjoined, and services that were not commanded. In cases of difficulty or distress, where it appeared of more than ordinary importance to secure the divine favour and protection, the patriarchs of old had resorted to vows, and bound themselves, in case he should vouchsafe to them the desired blessing, to render unto him according to the benefits he should confer upon them. Thus Jacob, when he had just left his father and family in order to seek in a foreign land a refuge from his brother's vengeance, *vowed*, that if the Lord would be with him and restore him to his home in peace, he would take God entirely for his God, and devote to him a tenth of all that he should possess. Gen. xxviii. 20—22. In the time of Moses the whole people resorted to the same measure, in order to obtain success against the Canaanites, Numb. xxi. 2. This, it must be confessed, has a legal appearance, and looks like offering to make a bargain with God ;

but vows may certainly be made in perfect consistency with the liberal spirit of the Gospel, for it is intimated that under the Gospel, yea, even in the so-termed millennial age, such a practice should obtain, Isa. xix. 21 ; and we know that Paul both made a vow himself, Acts xviii. 18, and united with others in services to which, by a voluntary engagement, they had bound themselves. It is, however, to be remarked that a vow, to be acceptable to God, must have respect to things in themselves lawful. It cannot cancel a former obligation, or superinduce one that is repugnant to it. All our obligations to obedience proceed from God. He has a supreme right to give laws to his creatures ; but if men, by entering into vows, could free themselves from the obligation of his laws, they might then, whenever they pleased, by their own act defeat his authority. Whatever, therefore, is in itself forbidden by God, and for that reason unlawful, cannot, by being made the matter of a vow, become justifiable. So that he who has vowed to do what cannot be done without sin, is so far from being obliged to perform his vow, that he is, notwithstanding his vow, obliged not to perform it ; the original wrong of making such a vow being greatly aggravated by keeping it. Now, in applying these remarks to the case of Jephthah, nothing is clearer than that human sacrifices were ever an abomination to the Lord, and that he had again and again interdicted them, with the strongest expressions of abhorrence and reprobation. Deut. xii. 31. Indeed, it was one of the grand reasons assigned for driving out the Canaanites, that they were in the habit of offering their sons and daughters to Moloch in the fire ; *i. e.*

of making burnt-offerings of them, as is reasonably to be inferred. It cannot be doubted, therefore, that if Jephthah really vowed such an offering to the Lord, it was utterly unlawful for him to perform it. His duty would have been to humble himself before God, and deeply repent of having entertained for a moment such a criminal purpose. But the *intrinsic character* of such a vow, supposing Jephthah made it, is one thing, and *its moral qualities as issuing from a mind in such a state as his then was*, is another. The vow itself may have been unlawful, and yet in making it he may not have been aware of its real nature; though his motives may have been devout, and in a measure acceptable to Heaven, yet he may have uttered it in great darkness and ignorance. Let the circumstances of his case be considered. Let it be borne in mind that he was born in a loose and degenerate period of the Israelitish nation, and that he was bred up beyond Jordan, far from the tabernacle, and in the near neighbourhood of heathen tribes, with whose idolatrous practices he would naturally become familiar. Under these circumstances, in a foreign land, and associated with a band of outlaws and freebooters who lived by rapine and violence, is it to be wondered at that he should, previous to his appointment as a leader of Israel, have sunk into a state of semi-paganism, from which he had by no means recovered, even at the time of his signal victory over the Ammonites? And in this benighted state, is it not easily conceivable that he might have thought to propitiate Jehovah by such a kind of offering as was sometimes presented by heathen worshippers, especially if we suppose he was further

influenced by some confused recollections of Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac by divine command? Would it be unnatural for a man, thus imperfectly instructed, on the eve of an important battle, in an excited state of mind, and under the promptings of a blind zeal, to bind himself, on condition of his success, to evince his gratitude by what he conceived a heroical and almost superhuman act of devotion? To us there is nothing violent or forced in the supposition; nothing inconsistent with the general tenor of the narrative; and in forming a correct estimate of his conduct on the occasion, it is exceedingly important, if possible, to ascertain *the real state of mind by which it was prompted*; for it is only in this that we can find an adequate clue to the right interpretation of his vow. Before entering, however, upon the more particular explication of this, it may be well to advert for a moment to the different kinds of vows in use among the Jews, and determine, if possible, to what class of them this of Jephthah properly belonged.

“Of these the most important was the *'herem* (חרם), which was accompanied by an *execration*, and answered to the *anathema* of the Septuagint and the Greek Testament. The person or thing thus vowed unto the Lord, was said to be ‘devoted’ to him, and could not be redeemed. Lev. xxvii. 28. When it respected *persons*, or animals of any kind, it implied that they were *devoted to destruction*: but when it respected *things*, it implied that they were either to be *utterly consumed by fire*, or to be irrevocably *dedicated to the Lord* for religious purposes. In its application to persons it seems to have been

uttered by public authority, and to have been restricted to *heathen aliens* and *enemies of God*, as the Amalekites, Canaanites, &c. (Judg. i. 17; Numb. xxi. 1—3); nor do we anywhere read that a father or a master of a family was ever authorized thus to anathematize, execrate, or devote to destruction one of his own household. The utter destruction of Jericho, with all that it contained excepting Rahab, affords a striking example of the *'herem*. Its grand feature was, that in no case could its objects, whether persons or things, be properly redeemed from the use, condition, or destiny to which they had been devoted. In this respect it differed from a second and milder kind of vow, usually termed *neder* (נדר), by which one engaged to perform some particular act of piety, as, for instance, to bring an offering to God, or otherwise to dedicate anything to him. The objects of this kind of vow were various,—as clean or unclean beasts, lands, the tithes of lands, houses, and the person of the vower himself; of all which we have a detailed account, Lev. xxvii. These various objects, with the single exception of clean beasts, might be *redeemed* at the rate and on the conditions specified in that chapter. Now, it is supposed by many critics that the vow of Jephthah is to be classed under this head. The sacred writer, in speaking of it, says, נדר נדר *vayiddar neder*, ‘and he vowed a *neder*,’ not a *'herem*; and consequently they say, it was such a vow as he might have redeemed by paying the prescribed ransom of thirty shekels, which was the fixed estimation for a female. Lev. xxvii. 4. But to this it is replied by Rosenmüller, that the terms *nadar*, to vow, and *neder*, a vow, are *generic*, comprehending

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both the redeemable and irredeemable class of vows. In proof of this he cites Numb. xxi. 2, where immediately after the words, 'And Israel *vowed a vow* (וַיִּוֹרֶה) unto the Lord,' &c., it is added, 'then I will *utterly destroy* (הִחָרַמְתִּי) *ha'haramti*, their cities;' from which it plainly appears that the '*herem*' may be comprised under the *neder*, though every *neder* was not a '*herem*'. As, therefore, the words alone do not enable us to determine satisfactorily the nature of the vow, it must be gathered from the circumstances. For ourselves, after an attentive consideration of all the incidents connected with the transaction, we are brought to the conclusion, that as far as Jephthah in making the vow had *any* statute of the divine law in his mind, it was rather that of the '*herem*' than of the simple *neder*; that his predominant idea was that of the *irrevocable devotement to death* of the object contemplated in his vow. But after all, it may well be doubted, whether Jephthah had his eye upon any particular precept or provision of the Mosaic code. For the reason before mentioned, we imagine his acquaintance with the law was extremely limited; that the distinction between the different classes of vows was a matter of which he had little or no conception; and that he was prompted at the moment far more by a *superstitious impulse*, than by a zeal according to knowledge. He knew in the gross that vows were recognised in the religious institutes of his people, that there was such a thing as a person's being *devoted* without redemption to God, and that such a vow, when taken, was sacredly binding; and this, we conceive, was about the sum of his knowledge on the subject. Possessing, then, this very partial

degree of light, and actuated by an intense solicitude as to the result of the engagement, he seems to have rushed precipitately into the assumption of a vow, which proved a fearful snare to his soul. That he became, however, subsequently more enlightened as to the import of the vow, and discovered a mode of dispensation from the literal execution of it, we shall endeavour to show in the sequel. But we are treating at present solely of his *intention* at the time, which, if we mistake not, was just that which the reader would naturally apprehend from the simple letter of the text. This we trust will be still more clearly illustrated in the notes that follow.

“31. *Whatsoever cometh forth*.—Or, Heb. אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא, *asher yētzē*, *whosoever cometh forth*. The rendering given to these words will no doubt be governed in a great measure by the translator's views of the real nature of the vow uttered on this occasion; as whether it had reference primarily to a human being or a brute animal. To us the former appears decidedly the most probable. Admitting that the Heb. הַיּוֹצֵא, *hayotzē*, *which cometh forth*, may apply equally to men or animals, yet the phrase, ‘cometh forth to meet,’ seems to imply an intelligent act,—*a coming forth with a design*, which could scarcely be predicted of any but a human being. Sheep, bullocks, and other animals fit to be offered in sacrifice, are usually enclosed in pastures and stalls, and could not be expected to come out to meet him. How unlikely, then, was it that any of the animals allowed for sacrifice should come forth from ‘the doors of his house,’ to say nothing of the probability that a dog or some unclean animal might meet him, which could neither

lawfully be consecrated to the Lord, nor offered as a burnt sacrifice!

“*Shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.* As much depends, in forming a judgment of the real character of Jephthah's vow, upon the correct explication of the terms in which it was made, it will be proper here to advert to the leading opinions of commentators on this point. These may be ascertained from the four following proposed modes of rendering, each of which has had its zealous advocates, whose collective treatises on the subject would amount to several volumes.

“(1.) The first is that given above: ‘*Whosoever* cometh out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return from the children of Ammon, shall be the Lord's, and I will offer *him* up for a burnt-offering.’

“(2.) The second is that adopted in the text of our common English Bibles:—‘*Whatsoever* cometh out of the doors of my house, &c., shall be the Lord's, *and* I will offer *it* up for a burnt-offering.’

“(3.) The third is that given in the margin of the English Bible:—‘*Whatsoever* cometh out of the doors of my house, &c., shall be the Lord's, *or* I will offer *it* up for a burnt-offering.’

“(4.) The fourth was proposed about sixty years since by Dr. Randolph, and is this:—‘*Whosoever* cometh out of the doors of my house, &c., shall be the Lord's, and I will offer (to) Him (viz. the Lord) a burnt-offering.’

“Of these, the first is that adopted by the Septuagint and Vulgate versions, and is undoubtedly the sense which the words of the original, if viewed in themselves, apart from any moral considerations, do

most naturally present. That this rendering supposes Jephthah to have had a human sacrifice in his thoughts when he made the vow, is undeniably true, and without doing violence to the letter we know not how to avoid this conclusion. We are aware that it is objected to this, that Jephthah was at this time undoubtedly a pious man, for it is said in the immediate connexion, that he was under the influence of the Spirit of God; and it cannot be supposed that such a man, under such an influence, could deliberately vow to God that he would commit murder—that he would vow to put to death the first person who should come forth to congratulate him, whether it might be man, woman, or child, yea, even if it should be his own, his only daughter. But to say nothing of the impropriety of applying the invidious term *murder* to Jephthah's *intention*, we do not think much stress can be laid upon the fact of his being said to be at this time under the influence of the Spirit of God, for it does not appear that this phrase, as used by the Old Testament writers, indicates by any means such a kind of influence as is intended in the New Testament by one's being led, prompted, governed by the Holy Spirit. In the latter case it denotes mainly a *moral, spiritual, sanctifying* influence; in the former, it simply implies the divine bestowment of remarkable gifts, whether *physical* or *intellectual*, for the performance of a particular work, or the discharge of a particular office. The endowments indicated by it were seated rather in the head and the body, than in the heart; so that, taken by itself, it affords us no clue to the *moral character* or *actions* of the subject of it. A similar train of

remark is applicable also to another objection urged on the ground of Jephthah's being enrolled by Paul, in the eleventh of Hebrews, among the eminent men who had obtained a good report through faith. This is supposed to afford conclusive proof that he was a good man, and therefore that he could not have been guilty of a conduct so contrary to the divine law. But it is extremely doubtful whether the faith celebrated in that chapter was in every instance a justifying and saving faith, in relation to the individuals mentioned. The apostle's object seems to be merely to illustrate the power of a *firm belief in the divine testimony*, which may doubtless exist separate from a renewed heart. We learn elsewhere, from the same authority, that a man might have the faith of miracles so as to remove mountains, and yet not be a good man. We do not affirm that Jephthah was not a good man, yet we derive no absolute assurance from the simple fact of his *putting a strong faith in the divine promises*, that he was an eminent saint, and incapable of making such a vow as we have supposed above. The objections, therefore, drawn from these sources against the interpretation now recited do not seem to carry with them any great weight. Jephthah may still have meant to vow that he would offer up a human sacrifice ; but that such a sacrifice was *actually* made does not, we conceive, necessarily follow from this admission. Of this, however, more in the sequel.

“The second rendering, which is that of the translators of the English Bible, is liable, perhaps, to no serious grammatical objection, though we think less punctiliously faithful to the original than the former, for the reasons stated in the previous note. It is,

however, the view given by Josephus, who makes Jephthah promise 'to offer in sacrifice what living creature soever should first meet him,' and he affirms that the vow, in that sense, was executed by him; 'he sacrificed his daughter as a burnt-offering, offering such an oblation as was neither conformable to the law, nor acceptable to God.' The same sense is given by the Targum of Jonathan, and is, perhaps, the sense which has on its side the balance of authorities, both Jewish and Christian. But the question whether Jephthah actually sacrificed his daughter, is still to be decided on grounds independent of the balance of authority as to the literal purport of the vow.

"The celebrated Rabbi, David Kimchi, who flourished in the twelfth century, seems to have been the first who proposed the third translation, or that given in the margin of the English Bible. According to this interpretation, the Heb. copulative, *and*, is to be translated *or*, and the sense of the vow would then be, 'Whatsoever cometh out of the doors of my house, I will, if it be a thing fit for a burnt-offering, make it one; *or*, if not, will consecrate it to his service.' This will suppose him, in making the vow, to have had a mental reserve, which would allow him to act as the *exigency of the case* might require. It gives him an *alternative* which by the other mode of rendering is effectually precluded. This construction, however, is certainly liable to a very important grammatical objection. Though it is unquestionable that the particle, *is* sometimes used as a disjunctive, and properly rendered 'or,' as Exod. xii. 5, 'hand *or* foot;' xxi. 15, 'father *or* mother;' 2 Sam. ii. 19, 'right hand *or* left;'

yet it may be doubted whether it is ever used to disjoin things so completely as this translation supposes. Gussetius (Comm. Ling. Ebr.) contends that to give a disjunctive force, it is essential that the terms between which it stands should not be related as genus and species, or the one member comprehending the other, as otherwise it would be as absurd as to say, 'Thou shalt not injure a man or his head,' the one term evidently including the other. So in the present instance, the clause, 'It shall be the Lord's,' is obviously, he affirms, the general; while 'It shall be offered up for a burnt-offering,' is merely the included particular, indicating the *special manner* in which it shall be the Lord's. This we cannot but regard as the interpretation required on strict philological principles; and if the passage were rendered, 'It shall be the Lord's, *even* I will offer it up for a burnt-offering,' it would come, we believe, still nearer to the genuine force of the original. We assent, therefore, to the remark of Noble (Plen. Inspir.), that 'this rendering is extremely forced and harsh, and one which critics have acquiesced in only to get rid of what they esteemed a greater difficulty. It also makes the second clause of the vow entirely unnecessary; for if Jephthah meant to say, that whatsoever came out of his house should be consecrated to the Lord in such a manner as was suitable to its nature, this is fully conveyed in the first clause; and the addition of the second, separated by *or*, instead of helping to determine his meaning, is of no use but to perplex it.' For these reasons we are compelled to reject the third hypothesis, as wholly unsustained by a just philological support.

“The fourth and last is Dr. Randolph’s rendering : ‘Whosoever cometh out, &c., shall be the Lord’s, and I will offer (to) Him a burnt-offering.’ According to this translation, Jephthah’s vow will consist of two parts. The first, that whatsoever *person* or *object* should come forth of his doors to meet him should surely be the Lord’s; *i. e.* should be *dedicated, consecrated for ever to his service*. The second, that he would besides this offer to Jehovah a burnt-offering. According to the rendering in our Common Version, the *very same* object or person who should ‘surely be the Lord’s,’ was to be offered up for a burnt-offering. According to that now proposed, they were to be *different* objects. This explanation appeared to Bp. Lowth so signally happy and conclusive, that he speaks of it as having ‘perfectly cleared up a difficulty, which for two thousand years had puzzled all the translators and expositors, had given occasion to dissertations without number, and caused endless disputes among the learned.’ Such a commendation, from such a source, undoubtedly entitles the proposed explanation to great respect, but it has still failed to satisfy the mass of commentators, and as we think for very good reasons. The sense hereby given to the original is not warranted by common usage. The Hebrew, it will be observed, is *והעליתיו עולה*, *vehaalithihu oldh*, where the suffixed pronoun *הו* *hu* is joined to the verb to express the thing offered, and not another example can be found, in which verbs of *offering* or *sacrificing* are accompanied with a suffix pronoun denoting *the Being to whom the offering is made*. On the contrary, instances of a precisely parallel usage to the present are of no uncommon occurrence. Thus, 1 Sam.

vii. 9, 'Then Samuel took a suckling lamb, *and offered it (for) a burnt-offering* (וַיַּעֲלֶה עֹלָה, *vəyā'alēhu oldh*), wholly to the Lord.' See also 2 Kings iii. 27, where we meet with a case exceedingly similar to this of Jephthah. What Jephthah, according to the most direct import of his words, is supposed to have promised to do, the king of Moab, when sore pressed by the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom, is affirmed actually to have done; and in precisely the same words, joined in the same construction: 'Then took he his eldest son, that should have reigned in his stead, *and offered him (for) a burnt-offering* (וַיַּעֲלֶה עֹלָה) upon the wall.' These words differ from Jephthah's only in the mood, tense, and person of the verb, and in the common variety in spelling of the noun, the same suffix ו and apparently in the same relation being used to each."

Such is a very exhaustive discussion of this interesting question.

ENVIOUS EPHRAIM.

CHAPTER XII.

DISCRETION OF JEPHTHAH. FUGITIVES FROM EPHRAIM. SHIB-BOLETHS. TEMPER IN DISPUTANTS. THE JUDGES AND THEIR SONS.

WE have seen, in the course of our reading of the previous chapter, how Jephthah carried out the vow which he made in case of victory ; namely, to dedicate, or consecrate if you like, the first personage that should meet him on his victorious return, for ever to the Lord. I showed that the common notion that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter, or put her to death, as represented in oratorios and in paintings, is altogether apocryphal and fabulous ; that there is no reason to believe from the sacred record that he did so ; in fact, we can see it was impossible that he could have done so ; he was not a priest, therefore he could not sacrifice ; and if he had been a priest, he could not sacrifice a human being. The language also at the close of the preceding chapter, as we saw, clearly proves that she was merely devoted to a life of ceaseless or perpetual celibacy ; and that was a severe penalty in the estimate of a nation every woman in which expected she might be the mother of the promised Messiah.

In this 12th chapter we have the account of a troublesome sect or clan in the land of the name of Ephraim ; one of the tribes, in reality, who when they saw Jephthah return a conqueror, envied him, and evidently felt excessively provoked and vexed that they did not share in the laurels he had gained. But then they belonged to that not uncommon class who are delighted to wear the laurels if they can only escape the toil, the struggle, and the risk through which they are earned. And now that the laurels were gained, they made it out that the battle had been very slight, that the risk had been very little ; and they were excessively annoyed that they, brave heroes as they thought themselves, and able to do far grander exploits than Jephthah and his people were capable of, were not asked to go up against the children of Ammon, and fight. They therefore said—"Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee ? If you had, Jephthah, your victory would have been far more splendid, the results would have been far better ; our alliance would have been of really great value. But you did not do it ; you would not have it ; and now we are determined that though you have gained the victory, you shall not enjoy the fruits of it, but we will actually burn your house and yourself too with fire ;"—a very spiteful and mischievous party, who we shall see had the opportunity of doing what they regretted they had not done, or professed to regret they had not done. Jephthah therefore said to them, with that good sense and with that perfect composure which is always the proof of a right cause, "I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon ; and when I

called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands;" that is to say, you had the very opportunity you now regret has passed away; you were asked to join this alliance, but you were so cowardly that you wanted to hang between the one party and the other party, to see which way the scale would turn, and then you would fall in with the victorious party. "And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands;"—an Eastern phrase for, I exposed my life to danger and to jeopardy;—"and passed over against the children of Ammon; and the result was, not that my courage or my heroism gained the day, but that the Lord, to whom the glory belonged, delivered them into my hand. And, therefore, I ask you, as reasonable men, why are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me? Why should you pick a quarrel on such fabulous pretences? You had the opportunity, why did you not embrace it? And now that your own vacillating conduct, your own sense of expediency and forgetfulness of all principle has become apparent to you, you try to quarrel with me, your friend, who has fought for you and sheltered you by success, when you were unwilling, or unable, or afraid to fight for yourselves." However, Jephthah knew he was right, and he was not to be put down, nor would he submit to be trodden down; and therefore, "he gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim." It is generally supposed that this translation is not correct, and that the words ought to be, "And the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they (the Gileadites) said, Ye that are thus quarrelling are not the tribe of Ephraim, properly so called,

but are fugitives, the offscourings and the scum of Ephraim," as it might very properly be rendered. In fact, you can see there is no meaning in the statement, "The men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim." The men of Ephraim said no such thing; they complained that they were not asked to co-operate with them against the children of Ammon; and, therefore, this would not be fact. But the strict rendering is, "The men of Gilead smote Ephraim because the men of Gilead said,"—that is, Jephthah's party,—“You who are thus complaining that you were not asked to go to battle, are not the genuine tribes of Ephraim, but the mere offscourings; the mean, the base section of it; and therefore we are sure that your own tribe would not have done what you, its equivocal representatives, have now done.”

“The Gileadites then took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites, to prevent them escaping: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let us go over, that the men of Gilead said unto them,”—to ascertain who was a friend and who was a foe; it was a sort of watchword,—“Art thou an Ephraimite?” If he said “Nay,” that he was not, but one of themselves, then they would test him by what we call in military language a password; but then a password so constructed that they availed themselves of a peculiarity in the pronunciation of the Ephraimites, that would always detect an Ephraimite the moment that he opened his lips. We all know that the same language spoken in any one country is spoken very differently in different parts. The English of Cornwall is scarcely intelligible to a Londoner; and

the English of Yorkshire is not very intelligible to either. So in Scotland, the language of the Northern Highlands is different from that of the Western Highlands; and that of Aberdeen is quite different again from that of Edinburgh or Glasgow. And so we find in Continental languages. We cannot get a Frenchman to pronounce the *th*. So this tribe of Ephraim never could pronounce the letter Shin. There are two consonants in the Hebrew language; there is one called samech, which sounds like our *s*; there is the other called shin, which is pronounced like *sh*. The Ephraimites could pronounce the samech, but not the shin; and therefore, knowing this, the Gileadites said, "Now say, Shibboleth." The word Shibboleth means "a stream of water;" the word Sibboleth means "a burden, or a load." When they were ordered, "Say now, Shibboleth," and could only partially pronounce it, and said "Sibboleth," they were detected as not being Gileadites, but Ephraimites.

"6. *Say now Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth.* The original differs only in the first letter, *ס samech*, instead of *ש shin*. It is well known that several nations cannot pronounce certain letters. The sound of *th*, so familiar to English organs, cannot be pronounced by the people of some European countries, nor by the Persians, though a common sound among the Arabians. To this day, many of the German Jews cannot articulate this sound in reading their own Hebrew Scriptures, but substitute *ss*, as *baiss* for *baith*, a house, *bereshiss* for *bereshith*, the beginning. It has been remarked also, that *sh*, which is entirely wanting in many languages, is of peculiarly difficult pronunciation to persons whose organs have not in childhood been inured

to it. The word chosen by the Gileadites as a test-word, signifies *ear of corn*, and also a *stream*, and was, perhaps, suggested by being the name of the object immediately before them, the river on the banks of which they stood. 'Sibboleth,' on the other hand, denotes a *burden*, and how these different objects were distinguished in the pronunciation of the Ephraimites, it is difficult to say. Differences of pronunciation, however, even among those speaking the same language, or the same dialect, are nothing extraordinary. In later times, Peter was easily distinguished as a Galilean in Pilate's hall by his pronunciation, Mark xiv. 70, and travellers in the East inform us, that the Arabic of Cairo, of Aleppo, and of Bagdad, is so different, that one who has made himself master of this language in one of these cities, cannot, without great difficulty, understand or be understood in the others."

Now these two words have become incorporated into almost every language. Constantly we hear people say, "You cannot pronounce our Shibboleth;" that is to say, "You have not our party watchword." And, very unhappily, the Shibboleths and the Sibboleths about which men quarrel are not righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; but questions of ceremony, discipline, outward forms and modes of government, which have rent Christendom in pieces. And it is a very singular fact, that men's tempers always are hottest when it is a Shibboleth or a Sibboleth about which they quarrel, and not some great truth. It is a very singular fact, that the quarrels among true Christians, who are at one upon all essential truth, but differ upon outward circumstances, have been ten times more furious than the quarrels

that have taken place between Christians and heathens, between Christians and Mahometans ; between Christians holding vital truth, and professed Christians who hold deadly error. But generally speaking, you may lay it down when two sections of the Christian church holding essential truth differ, you may always assume it as a practical guide that the party who has the worst temper has, in his own belief, always the worst cause. Whenever men are conscious that they are right, they are calm, decided it is true, uncompromising, but still calmly and solemnly so. But when parties are conscious they are wrong, they generally make up their conscious want of right by excess and turbulence of temper. You see it in every chapter we have read ; you have seen it in the previous chapter, and you have seen it in this chapter ; the Ephraimites were more violent when they were conscientiously wrong ; and you see the calm in the case of Jephthah, who was quiet, because truth and righteousness can afford to be quiet ; error and unrighteousness cannot afford to be so.

The close of the chapter consists of an allusion to different judges, with the number of their sons, which probably includes grandsons as well as sons ; for sons and grandsons are often quoted as if they were sons. Ibzan is one ; and Elon another ; and Abdon another ; and of whom very little is said. Some one said, "Happy is that nation whose annals are uninteresting." Perhaps it is true ; when a nation's annals are dullest a nation's happiness has often been the greatest. Now here we read of judges who had not in their reign the turmoils and quarrels that were in the reign of the previous judges. Their names are mentioned ; their

usefulness may have been as real ; but while one man becomes celebrated by occupying the high places of the field, others are celebrated in heaven by quietly, unostentatiously, it may be obscurely, fulfilling the mission that God has entrusted to their charge.

SAMSON'S PARENTS.

CHAPTER XIII.

ISRAEL'S SINS. CHRIST THE ANGEL. THE NAZARITE VOW.
MANOAH'S INTERVIEW WITH THE ANGEL. HIS OFFERING.
SIGHT OF GOD. HIS WIFE'S INFERENCE. BIRTH OF SAMSON.

THIS chapter opens with an incident, alas, too frequent in its occurrence in the history of the children of Israel. They were a people signally blessed, specially favoured, and honoured above all people with mercies, blessings, and distinctions; but instead of showing that gratitude for them which became a people thus signally favoured, we read that they were no sooner left for a moment to themselves, like children from their leading-strings, than they began to stumble and do evil in the sight of God. But just as often, we read in these chapters of Joshua and Judges, that they sinned as a nation, so often God punished them as a nation also; teaching us that not only individual sins meet with individual retribution, but that national delinquency is noticed, and punished by national judgments by Him through whom kings reign and princes decree justice.

We read, however, that whilst God punished them for their sins, he ever raised up in the midst of the

punishment some signal and successful deliverer ; and this chapter opens out the history of one of the most remarkable judges that Israel ever had ; and the most interesting record of the sins and the sufferings, the inconsistencies and the virtues of a great and eminent man. It appears here, that the angel of the Lord appeared unto a woman, and promised she should have a son. Now let me explain that the Hebrew for "Angel of the Lord," as indeed I stated before, ought not to be translated "Angel of the Lord," but, literally and strictly, "Angel Lord ;" Melek Yehovah ; that is, "The sent Jehovah," "The commissioned Jehovah." And you will notice in the sequel of the story of this chapter, that he is ultimately recognised as Deity by Manoah and his wife, and worshipped and adored accordingly. It does seem that in the Levitical economy, and under the dispensation of the Judges, that our blessed Redeemer did appear, in some form, to his people of old, to cheer, to sustain, and to comfort them. He was not yet incarnate in our humanity ; but he appeared plainly on the plains of Mamre ; he appeared in Sodom ; he appeared in the burning bush, where Moses took off his shoes, according to the Eastern custom, and bowed down and adored ; he appeared repeatedly in their wanderings through the desert ; he appeared in the burning pillar of fire by night, and in the dark cloud by day. And the same angel Jehovah, the same messenger Jehovah, evidently appeared here, and in every act indicated the presence and glory of Deity.

The Nazarite vow was, that they should not taste wine, nor yet use a razor, nor eat anything ceremonially unclean ; and as Samson was to be a Nazarite to the

day of his death, so his mother was to be before his birth. This is not a law that was binding upon all Israel, but only in the instance of an exceptional institution ; and to quote this as a precedent for us would be to misquote and misapply Scripture ; the exceptional institution, because exceptional, is not to be the law and governing guide of a whole people. And, therefore, however useful the Nazarite vow was, and however divinely instituted by God, having its special mission to fulfil and finally fulfilling it, it passed away, and ceased to be an obligation upon any.

“ The mother must conceive the only giant of Israel, and yet must drink but water ; neither must the child touch any other cup. Never wine made so strong a champion as water did here. He that gave, that power to the grape can give it to the stream. O God, how justly do we raise our eyes from our tables unto thee, which canst make water nourish and wine enfeeble us ! ” — *Bp. Hall*.

When the woman was told that she should have a son, and that that son should deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, she came and told her husband, startled and surprised by the splendid spectacle that passed by, whose countenance was radiant, whose name would not be communicated, and whose promise was that she should have a son, and that that son should be the deliverer of Israel.

Then Manoah made this special promise the subject of special prayer. “ He entreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again.” God hearkened and heard, and the angel Lord appeared again unto the woman ; but Manoah was not with her. And she came and told

her husband. "And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am. And Manoah said," with great boldness, but the boldness of Christian faith, not of human presumption, "Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?" anxious that so remarkable a child should have a rare and remarkable education; and that being a divine gift, his instruction should be inspired by the divine presence. Then this angel repeated all he had already said to the woman, and her duty strictly to observe all that he commanded. And then Manoah said, "Let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee." It is evident that this being appeared in human nature, and was recognised and visible as a man. "But he answered, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread;" as much as to say, I am a spiritual being; I subsist not by earthly bread; and therefore to ask me to partake of thy hospitality is to mistake my nature, my mission, and my office. "And if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord." I have no doubt these words imply that it was to be offered unto himself, for it is added—"Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the Lord;" literally translated, "The angel Jehovah."

THE BIRTH OF SAMSON.

CHAPTER XII.

MANOAH asked the angel Jehovah, who appeared to him, and whose doings become more mysterious as the drama proceeds, "What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?"—a very just and sensible remark. His reply was, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" The word "secret" is not the strict, or at least only rendering; the same Hebrew word or adjective that is here translated "secret," is in the 9th chapter of Isaiah translated "Wonderful:" "His name shall be called the Wonderful! the mighty God! the Prince of Peace! the Father of the age to come;" words applied to the Child that should be born of the Virgin. And therefore this word, as one of the epithets of the angel Jehovah, serves still more to identify the celestial vision of Manoah with the person and character of the Son of God.

"*Name*, in reference to the Supreme Being, is in Scripture style very much the same as *nature*; and we suppose this to be the real drift of Manoah's question, to learn the nature, the essential character of the

mysterious being whom he addressed; for that he regarded him as a superhuman personage, cannot, we think, be doubted from an attentive examination of the passage. At any rate, the answer of the angel, as we shall see, was adapted to such a scope in Manoah's interrogation. That he was prompted by somewhat of an unhallowed curiosity in making the inquiry is indeed supposed by many commentators, but we see nothing in the text to warrant it. On the other hand, we know no reason to doubt that he was really actuated by the motive assigned, a disposition to render him due honour and thanks when the promise should be fulfilled."—*Bush*.

Manoah offers a kid as a sacrifice, according to the ancient economy, when the great sacrifice on Calvary was only foreshadowed, and not yet made. "And the angel did wondrously"—that is, acted worthy of his name. You will see the force of this phrase if you recollect the translation of the adjective is not "secret," but "wonderful;" "seeing it is wonderful." Then, when the sacrifice was offered, the angel acted worthy of the mysterious name by which he was known, as being wonderful. "For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground. But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord, or the angel Jehovah."

Now, that Manoah and his wife learned before this true but transient apocalypse of heaven disappeared, that he was Jehovah, is evident from the phrase in verse

22 : “ Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God ;” clearly understanding thereby that it was God, just as Jacob understood that the angel that wrestled with him was God, and on account of which belief he called the place where he wrestled with him Peniel, for he said, “ I have seen God face to face.” So Manoah clearly understood, from the whole story, that the subject of this sight was God ; and he believed, what was the common impression among the best instructed Jews,—an impression that like a great tradition had floated through heathendom itself,—that the Being whom he saw was the second Person in the blessed Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ. But his wife said, with very great good sense, and far greater self-possession than her husband, “ If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these ;” that is as if she had said, “ He has blessed us, he has done us good, and therefore your conclusion that he is about to kill us seems very rash and hasty. My conclusion seems the more logical and consistent one, that he means to bless us with greater blessings than he has yet bestowed upon us.”

The idea that a sight of God was death to the beholder was then common. “ Thou canst not see my face ; for there shall no man see me and live ;” and for this very reason God put him into a cleft of a rock, and permitted him to see, as it were, only ‘ his back parts,’ a very *partial* display of his glory. So when Jacob had been favoured with a visit from the same divine person in the shape of an angel, he expressed

his astonishment that "his life was preserved," Gen. xxxii. 29, 30. From these passages we may learn the grounds of the prevailing impressions on the subject. But while we do not wonder at the apprehensions of Manoah, we the more admire the composure of his wife. She argued in a directly different way. She considered the mercies already vouchsafed to them as tokens for good; for why should God confer such singular honour upon them, if he intended to kill them? Why did he accept the burnt-offering at their hands? Why stoop to impart to them such information? Why give them such gracious promises? Was all this done to mock them? Indeed, if he should kill them, how could the promises be fulfilled? or for what purpose were they given? The honour of the divine veracity therefore required that they should be preserved. This was a just mode of arguing; for such mercies were both evidences and pledges of his love; and therefore were rather to be considered as earnest of future blessings, than as harbingers of ill. The woman in this showed herself not only the strongest believer, but the wisest reasoner. The incidents related may teach us, That in times of dark and discouraging providences or sore temptations, we should remember the past experience of God's goodness as a ground of present support. "Account the long-suffering of God to be salvation." He that hath so kindly helped us and dealt with us hitherto, means not to destroy us at last. That the sinner oppressed with a sense of his deserts has no reason to despair. Let him remember what Christ has done for him by his bloody sacrifice, and read in it a sure proof, that he does not design his death.

CONFLICTING THOUGHTS OF GOD.

CHAPTER XIII.

“AND Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.”—Judges xiii. 22, 23.

The inference which was here drawn by Manoah was not at all an uncommon one in those days. It was always believed, as already stated, that the sight of Deity was the precursor of death. Jacob said, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God; none other than the gate of heaven;” and he feared he should die because he had seen God face to face. Isaiah exclaimed, “Woe is me; I am undone; because mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts.” And God’s own statement concerning himself was, “No man can see my face and live.” You have, therefore, the grounds on which Manoah came not very logically, but very naturally, to the conclusion, “I have seen God; and therefore I shall die.” This very feeling, so universal, is the shadow of the first sin projected from Paradise; where man by

sin, and in consequence of sin, learned to dread and shrink from that Blessed and Glorious Being who was once his Companion, his Father, and his Friend. If man shrinks from God, it is evident there is something wrong. You need no evidence of your guilt, and ruin, and fall, additional to the fact that the idea of God carries to your mind not filial reverence, but terror; and that the instinctive *wish*, not conclusion, but *wish*, of every unholy and wicked man, is, "Let there be no God to see me or to judge me." Is it possible to suppose that man was made originally thus? No! Man was made to hear the sweetest music in the footfall of God; to see in his approach all that could charm, captivate, and delight; and the very fact that he should now shrink from the Being he once courted, and dread the approach of Him whose presence was once fulness of joy, is evidence that some great revolution, some disastrous change, has taken place in the creature. In other words, it is the indirect, but no less powerful proof, that sin has entered; and that, looking at God through the distorting medium of a guilty conscience, we see the avenger of wrong-doing, instead of the Father and the Friend of the holy and the innocent.

It will be useful to take this passage as the illustration of a feeling that exists in one class, and also of a truer and a more Christian feeling which predominates in another class, in reference to God, and to all that God does and sends. We all have more or less a feeling inveterate and old, that whatever comes from eternity, or from God, or is supernatural, must be more or less terrible. How do you account for it that a child's first impressions of God are impressions of

terror? Or that our deepest and earliest ideas of the future, the eternal, the infinite, are awe and alarm, not love, confidence, and joy? When God visits us in affliction, or trials; when he palsies the strength of one, takes away the life of another, mingles the bitter cup and places it in the hand of him who is loth to drink it; when he sweeps off the fruits of years of industry, or removes the delight of our eyes; do we not naturally construe these as dark angels of terror, as dispensations entirely evil? Do we not infer that God is coming to destroy and to crush,—in no sense or shape to sanctify, to save, and to make happy? Manoah reasoned thus. He said, “I have seen God; I am therefore satisfied we are now about to be destroyed.” But if we have in the wife of Samson an inquisitive, and persevering, and evil-minded woman, we must not take her as a type of her sex: let us rather look at the wife of Manoah, —Samson’s mother,—who far outshone in every excellence, in strength of mind, in pure instinct, in just reasoning, what would be supposed to be her more gifted and able husband. He argues, “God is come to destroy me;” and the poor man gets bewildered by terror and alarm—loses his senses for the moment—is thrown off his balance, and in short gives up all for lost. But his wife steps in, and with an instinctive logic, as severe as it was beautiful, states premises on which she builds a more just and a more delightful conclusion. The husband, supposed to be the stronger, more gifted, and intellectual, is paralysed with terror; the woman, supposed to be weaker, less gifted, and intellectual, remains calm and undisturbed; reasons with an accuracy, a force, and a conclusiveness

that her husband must have admired as well as appreciated, and, if he had any sense, have thanked her for. It is argued by some that woman's intellect is far inferior to man's. This reasoning is absurd. We can produce at this moment the names of females who have mastered the severest mathematics,—written the ablest works on science,—set forth the sweetest poetry, and shown a grasp and variety of mind not excelled by the supposed more gifted sex. But there is rarely instituted the true comparison. Woman's mind is differently constituted from man's; she excels where he would come short, and he excels where she fails. There is difference of kind, not difference of degree. But most certainly in times of alarm, of terror, of dismay, there has often been exhibited by woman a persistency, a calmness, a clearness of reasoning, that would lead one to infer that she was in these circumstances the more heroic. For instance, the three Marys remained at the cross when apostles forsook Christ in terror, and fled for shelter elsewhere. At the tomb the Marys were the first to ask after, as they thought, their dead, but, as they gladly found, their risen Lord. Timothy's father is not even mentioned; but his mother and his grandmother are spoken of as persons that were the means of his enlightenment and his progress in grace, in goodness, in conformity to God. And so in after ages we have found woman by the bedsides of the sick, by the vigils of the dying, amid the ranks of the slain, breathing the pestilential air of the military hospital, exhibiting a love that never faltered in the worst, nor wearied in the best, of times. If we must quote Samson's wife as an unhappy specimen of her sex, let us put her down as an exception; and

let us often refer to Manoah's wife as a specimen of a calm, self-possessed, and intelligent Christian woman, beautiful and instructive.

The reasoning of Manoah's wife was in this wise: "You say God is now going to kill us. It does seem to me that the premises do not sustain the conclusion; for if he had been going to kill us, would he have accepted an offering from us? would he have shown us all these bright things in the future? would he have told us all these good things? Is it not the true inference that if God has blessed us in the past, he will bless us in the future? And therefore I argue that instead of being about to kill us, he is going to come down upon us in showers of richer and more lasting benedictions."

We have in this little conversation between Manoah and his wife, an interesting instance of the value of personal communication and conversation on Scripture truths and difficulties. It is said in the Proverbs, "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth man's face his fellow." The want of living intercourse often injures deep but solitary thinkers. One secluded student, however gifted, keeps looking at a thought or dispensation at one angle, and in one light; it occupies the whole horizon of his mind; he dwells incessantly upon it; and the result is that he takes an exaggerated or a distorted view of what is true. He goes and speaks to another person upon the subject; hears his thoughts, begins to look at it in his light, views it at the angle at which he views it; and his own views are modified or intensely altered; and if there be a cloud, he sees its edge gilt with glory; if there be a dark sky, he is taught, as Manoah's wife taught her

husband, to see sunshine beyond it. Mutual conversation about a truth is the means of enlightening two parties, enabling us no longer to dwell on half a truth, which is often a lie, but to see the whole truth, in its fair, just, and beautiful proportions.

Let us look at the argument of Manoah's wife. "If God had meant to kill us, would he have taken a burnt-offering at our hands? If he had meant to destroy us, would he have told us such things as these?" Now apply this maxim to the history of God's dealings with his people, and you will see how just and true it is. If God were really hostile to our race, if God were what human nature is prone in its aberration to think Him—a revengeful, angry Being, ever watching to destroy, instead of ever watching to bless—let me ask, would he not have made the earth the birth-place, the death-bed, and the grave of the twin sinners that first rebelled against Him? And when man corrupted his way, and the Flood swept the whole earth by its resistless waves, why did he spare a remnant? why did the sun rise again upon the retiring waters in a fresher glory, and the moon shine again from the firmament in more silvery beauty; and seed-time and harvest return; and all nature, instead of sinking in the waves, an irretrievable wreck, emerge from her baptism more beautiful, and richer in promise than before? Why did he thus spare us, if he meant really to destroy us? May we not construe every instance of his sparing goodness to our race as a pledge and proof that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live? If we come down the stream of time, why carried he Abraham from the land of

Ur? why talk with him face to face, as a man talks with his friend and his fellow? Why such touching interest in Isaac, in Jacob, in Joseph? Why, as a mother comforteth her child, to use the scriptural illustration, did he comfort and speak to them? Would he have guided Israel through the desert, making the sea open its bosom to let them pass; causing the hard granite to gush forth in refreshing waters; making the cloud his commissariat, and manna and bread to fall from heaven? Would he have raised up prophets, teachers, priests, ceremonies, sacrifices; a temple with its significant types and its instructive forms; why did he do all this if he meant to destroy us? The fact that with such scrupulous attention, so great liberality, and so ceaseless munificence, he provided for man even when he rebelled against him, is irresistible proof that Manoah's wife reasoned well when she argued, If God meant to destroy us, would he have bestowed so many blessings upon us, or spared us from so many judgments? If God meant to destroy us, why send Christ to die for us? Why Gethsemane, Calvary, and the Cross? Why those glorious words, "God so loved us that he gave his only-begotten Son to die for us"? Why did he raise up apostles to preach it; why inspire evangelists to record it? Could he have hated us; could this Being have desired to destroy us? No, no; Calvary lifts its awful head, Mount Tabor its sunny peak; and Gethsemane, and Bethlehem, and the Mount of Olives repeat their solemn scenes, and all tell us that if God had meant to destroy us, or had been pleased to kill us, he never would have done what we have seen, or accepted the unprecedented burnt-offering and sacri-

fice of which we were witnesses. And yet is not the popular notion of God very much of this kind—that God the Father is ever waiting to destroy; that his very nature is to crush us; but that Christ the Son steps in and averts his wrath, and prevents our ruin? This is a monstrous notion; it is not the idea disclosed in the New Testament. It is there taught, not that God loves us because Christ died for us; but that Christ died for us because God loved us. In other words, the death of our Blessed Lord was not to make God placable; but to provide a channel by which and through which, consistently with his own justice, holiness, and truth, he might have mercy upon the very chiefest of sinners. God loved Adam amid the wrecks of Paradise just as he loved him before he fell: he so loved Adam before he fell that he made the earth all beauty, and the sky all splendour—all sounds music, and all scenes bliss; but God so loved Adam after he fell that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. And therefore the common idea that God hates, and seeks to revenge, and that Christ steps in to avert, however true it may be in the theology of ultramontane infallibility, is not true, nor sustained in God's Holy Word.

Were the Lord hostile to us—to use still further the illustration of Manoah's wife—would he have constantly said, "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near?" Would he constantly urge, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Would he have given us so many exceeding great and precious promises? Would he have given us so

many calls in his providence, so many warnings in his own dispensations to come to him? Would he have instituted baptism, with its significant water? would he have appointed a communion-table, with its blessed commemoration? What do all these things show, but that a Being who had omnipotence by which he could have expunged this orb, and filled its place with a holy, happy, and adoring one, has not only not done so, but has come ceaselessly with rising and setting suns, urging, entreating, imploring, as if our salvation were his happiness, that we would turn and repent, and come to him; and be made his happy sons, his rejoicing daughters, the heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ? We argue, therefore, from the whole history of God's dealings with his church, that his mind towards us is love; that his purposes are beneficent. If any man perish, he perishes a suicide. God's hand is stretched out to snatch him from the floods, and he rejects it. God's cry is, "Come unto me;" his answer practically is, "I will not come." God's question is, "Why will ye die?" His answer is, "Because I will die." And therefore the terrible ruin, the awful misery of the lost is that man, in the face of love, in the face of mercy, ran from God, and perished, neither damned by an irreversible decree, nor crushed by predestination—nor prevented by any obstruction save his own sins; that he perished because he would perish: and the corroding and consuming recollection of lost souls for ever will be, "I did it all myself; and no one in heaven or earth did it for me." God has given us so many tokens of his loving-kindness and favour that this must be the inference from it.

But, adds Manoah's wife, he has not only told us so many things, but he has also showed us so many things. And why show them, but that we may be persuaded that he means, longs, yearns to bless us, not desires or waits to destroy us? Open the page of Providence: you see God nursing the infant flower, tinting with an unseen pencil the lowliest field blossom; ministering to the sparrow on the house-top; feeding as he hears the cry of the wild raven; and clothing the lilies of the field with a splendour and a glory in comparison of which Solomon's becomes utterly pale; and then adding, "If God so clothe with such beauty the grass, so transient, which to-day is, and to-morrow is used for fuel, cast into the oven, will he not much more take care of you, O ye of little faith?" Why does God leave such lessons for us in providence? why does he show this exquisite care of the very minutest things? so much so that wise men have said it is very difficult to settle whether the microscope or the telescope tells us most of the wonderful attributes of God? Certainly, it seems as if the microscope had the precedence; for what does it show? That this Great Being, who takes care of worlds in their orbits, who keeps millions and millions of worlds (for the stars that we see in the sky are but the sentinels and the outposts of that mighty host that are spread out and shine upon the plains of infinitude); and who has all these to take ceaseless charge of, seems to have expended as much skill, care, and elaboration upon the petals of that wild field flower as he has expended on the creation of a world, or the arrangement of the orbs of the sky! What does this teach me? That

there is no want of mine so little, no grief of mine so tiny, no sorrow so obscure, that God does not notice, and take care of, and minister to continually. He that hears an archangel's song, wipes away the tear from an orphan's eye; He that takes care of the greatest things, does not feel descent when he condescends to notice, deal with, and minister to the humblest and the lowliest of his redeemed and ransomed family. Oh, if inspired by his Spirit we will read God's history of his dealings with his own people; if we will search our own biographies; if we will gaze around, above, beneath, within, we shall see only more and more the strength and accuracy of the logic of this woman—"If God has done all these things, it is impossible that he can mean to make us unhappy, to destroy or to crush us." Thus the wife of Manoah reasoned; and thus too, taking precedent and encouragement from her, we should reason in circumstances of greater difficulty and distress. Are you placed in great tribulation? Do I address any who feel as if every vial of wrath were poured out upon them in wasting succession? Do I address any who see quenched the light of their firesides, and depart like a vision those they dearly loved, and perish, as if they had taken wings and fled, the riches their industry had accumulated? Are there any pining under wasting sickness; any having that sorrow within which is too poignant for tears, and too bitter to find expression? My dear friends, these are not tokens that God hates you. The husband, Manoah, would so argue; but his wife, with brighter light and better logic, would say, "These dark angels have blessings in their bosoms; these tribulations are

hidden mercies ; they look to us terrible : let us wait, and ponder, and trust, and pray, and we shall see they are radiant emissaries from heaven, kind messengers from God, ambassadors from him and benefactors to us." And hence, out of them the Christian will pick evidences of love ; in them the Christian will see the loving-kindness of the Lord ; and those we erase from memory, and cannot understand by reason of their mystery, we shall yet learn to unravel, for what we know not now we are sure we shall know hereafter. At all events, if God has given us his Son, shall he not with him freely give us all things ? If he has done so much good, and shown us so much beneficence in the past, will he send now messengers of wrath to overwhelm ? Let us rather infer they are disguised angels of love, that in their transit through time will leave benedictions on our hearts.

Let us apply these words to individual cases, and let us see how comforted we may be by the reasoning of Manoah's wife. Have losses such as I have alluded to, trials, bereavements, disappointments, weakened and wasted your attachment to this world ? Are you more and more persuaded that this world is not as it should be ; and not a place, after all, such as you long to be in for ever ? Do you begin to feel fewer anxieties about its gains, less concern about its losses, and in all respects more indifference as to its affairs ? What is this ? It is God weaning your heart from time, and winning it for eternity ; it is God teaching you as you have never been taught before, this world is not your rest ; "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." If God has impressed upon your heart this one initiatory lesson, this alpha-

bet of Christianity, do not despise it; take it as a token, such as Manoah's wife took God's dealings, that he means to teach you yet more fully the way of the Lord. Are there any beginning to ask, it may be for the first time, earnestly from the depths of their hearts, satisfied that time is exhausting itself, and life ebbing, and eternity drawing nearer, with its unsounded depths every moment—"What must I do to be saved?" Take it as a token for good. God inspires the question which he means to answer; he instils what you begin to feel. If God meant to have destroyed and ruined you, he never would have prompted in the depths of your soul the most momentous question man can ask—a question that God alone can answer, and, blessed be his name! that he will answer. Are there any in whose hearts are aspirations after a purity, a love, and a peace that they have not? whose sympathies are at this moment stronger and entirer than they ever were with "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report"? Do you begin now as you never did before to hate what is evil, and to love, even if you cannot yet reach, the practice of what is good? What is this? It is God laying in the heart the foundations of a glorious fabric; it is the breath of heaven passing over a heart once dead in trespasses and in sins; it is the smoking flax, that will brighten into flame; the dawn that will burst into noon-day; the beginning of a work of which it is said that God is the author, and of which it is predicted God shall be the finisher. Take it, therefore, as a token for good; and feel that if God had meant to destroy us, or even to suffer us to perish,

he never would have begun in our hearts so good and great a work as this. Are there any in whose hearts an appeal from the pulpit for liberality for what is good, for the extension of the Gospel, for the spread of education, for comfort to those that are comfortless, and help to those that are helpless, meets with response from no mere evanescent impulse, but from a sense of responsibility, of duty, and the recollection of that blessed truth, "Though rich, he for us became poor; that we through his poverty might be made rich"? Do you take now a deeper interest in your brother? Once you said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" and now you begin to feel that every man that has, owes a duty to him that has not; and any man that can say what will make another happier, owes it to that man to say so; because there is a debt we are ever paying, and never can pay fully, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." Do you look upon the Sabbath as the brightest, sunniest day of the week? upon the sanctuary as a scene of light, and of comfort, and of instruction? Do you come hungry and thirsty for living bread and living water? Do you love God's holy law, and God's holy book; not making religion the exclusive thing, for that would be irrational; but the dominant and regulating thing, for that is Christian? What is all this to you? Just as clear a token that God has begun in your heart the work of grace that will culminate in glory, as it is that the dawn is the precursor of daylight, and the morning the prophet of approaching day. Can any of you say, "I was blind, but I now see?" Can any say, "I count all but loss for the excellency of Christ?" Can you say, "A

day in thy courts is better than a thousand in the gates of sin?" Can you say, "To me to live is Christ; and to die will be great gain?" Blessed and happy people; ye are redeemed by precious blood; ye are justified, ye are sanctified; ye are the sons of God, ye are the heirs of glory; and God will no more forsake you or suffer you to perish than he will forsake his own throne, or reverse his own laws, or forget his own promises, or be untrue to his own faithfulness. For what says the apostle? "We are confident in this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it in the day of Jesus Christ." And again, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth us." And, "Therefore let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God."

You see, therefore, that wherever God has thought it worth his while, if I may be pardoned for using the expression, to begin a good work, it is worth his while, for it concerns his glory, to carry it on to a triumphant conclusion. Instead of taking what God sends you as an augury of evil, look at it in the light and splendour of Him that sends it, and hail it as a prophecy of future good; it is a character of our God that he makes his past gifts reasons for new ones; and the more he gives the more he is pledged to give; till he who has felt most of God's love below has in that feeling the highest guarantee that he will never leave him, that he will never forsake him.

The lesson we draw from that is, therefore,—“Do not despise the day of small things.” Do not, because

you have received little, or made little progress, argue that you will be cast off, or that you can make no more. There is life as real in the germinating seed as there is in the ripe ear in autumn; and that little grain of mustard-seed will grow into an overshadowing tree; the light that shows men at first as trees walking will, by-and-by, be worthy of the name bestowed upon it, "His marvellous light." The dawn may be very dim, but noonday is behind it; the feeblest seed of living grace that you can find in your heart is a prophet, as sure and inspired as Isaiah, Malachi, or Jeremiah, that you will soon be an heir of the kingdom of heaven.

While you may not despise these small beginnings, that are prophecies of greater results, learn not to be satisfied with them. While it is a duty not to despise the grace that you have, it is a duty never separated from it, not to be contented with it. Nothing is so perilous as saying, "I see in myself the tokens of a Christian; and therefore I will settle down in triumph." It was Moses that saw most of God, who added still the prayer, "Show me thy glory." It was they who had eaten most of living bread who cried most earnestly, "Evermore give us this bread." A little Christianity, I freely admit, will carry you to heaven; but much Christianity will bring down heaven into your heart upon earth. It is the duty of every man not to be satisfied with being what he is; but in grace, as in the world, to aspire to be something yet greater.

The reason of all this sparing goodness we must not think is in ourselves. Why has God spared us; why thus blessed us; why added token upon token of future good-

ness; why made each mercy to be the earnest of another, each blessing the prophecy of a still greater one? Why has he done so? It was not for our own righteousness, to use the language of Moses, that the Lord hath brought us to possess the land; "not for thy righteousness and uprightness, for thou art a stiff-necked and a very rebellious people." God might have expunged the population of our globe, and it would have been no more missed than a handful of sand would be missed from the beach, or from the sea shore. It is the most wonderful phenomenon we have to think of, or inspiration records, that when it would have been so easy to destroy, God has exhausted the resources of wisdom, love, compassion, in seeking to save. Then why does he not save all at once? I ask, why does God regard man as man? If you were brutes, or dead matter, he might mechanically transfer you to a higher level. But recollect we are men, rational, thinking, responsible. God deals with animals as animals; he deals with men as men. He will save us, not against our nature, and in spite of our will, but according to our nature, and by making us willing. And instead of your casting the blame upon God, and saying, Why does he not save me if he means to save me? the true question is, Why do you not accept the offer that he makes, when you believe that offer will be the element and ground of your eternal salvation? We must be stripped of all the rags that we hold so dear, in order to be clad in raiment white and clean; we must feel ourselves the chiefest of sinners, that we may be made the least of saints; we must feel now as we shall feel then, "Not by works of righteousness, which we have

done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Then why did God interfere? The answer is, out of pure love, compassion, and mercy, and to set forth his glory while he saves the chiefest of sinners. The most wonderful result is, that God is covered with the richest glory when he snatches from the burning the very chiefest and the worst of sinners. God at this moment receives more glory from the thief snatched from the cross and made a worshipper in heaven, than he receives from all the angels that kept their first estate, or the morning stars that sang together at the birth of a new globe. Blessed thought, then, that "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Let me ask you, have you ever thought of these matters? Do you attach importance to religion? Why are we here? Is this world the end of us? If it be, we are the most miserable creatures in God's universe; and the God that made us and left us here to wrestle with sin and misery, without a hope beyond it, must be the Being that Manoah thought, not the Being that his wife concluded him to be. Or, if you feel that this world is not the end of you, are you to risk the future on a peradventure? Will you face eternity, saying to yourself, "Well, I think I shall be happy," or, "I may be happy"? Has God spoken; has God given a revelation of himself—a directory to us? If he has, open it and read it; and you will there discover that the way to heaven is not a guess, a conjecture, a vague hope; but Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

EARLY HISTORY OF SAMSON.

CHAPTER XIV.

HIS VISIT TO MANOAH. REASONS FOR CHOICE OF A WIFE.
HIS ENCOUNTER WITH A LION. THE STRANGE BEE-HIVE.
SAMSON'S RIDDLE. HIS WIFE'S URGENT REQUEST. HER
SUCCESS.

THE first impression produced by reading the biography of Samson is, that it is unworthy of the place it occupies in the sacred volume. Though it was the duty and the mission of the Israelites to exterminate the Philistines, the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of that land; yet they compromised it, and, in spite of divine orders, they spared some; and the whole of this story is designed to show the evil and disastrous consequences of flinching from an obvious duty, or, out of false compassion, forbearing to do what God had enjoined. You may fall back upon the objection, Why exterminate a nation? I answer, Why exterminate an individual? A great crime may be, for the sake of the well-being of society, apart altogether from duty in the sight of God, visited with signal punishment. And as that old heathen nation was signally corrupt and criminal, it was necessary in the providential arrangements of Heaven that it should be signally punished. And you will always

recollect, then, in reading this story that one object of recording so many minute and apparently unworthy things, is more and more to deepen the impression upon us that flinching from duty on any pretence is most inexpedient; and that trying to conciliate where you should try only to convert, is the very way to do mischief instead of good.

In entering on the history of Samson it may be important to explain that we had first of all a general, Joshua, leading his troops or his people, the children of Israel; then successive judges raised up, who headed armies, destroyed the fortifications of the Canaanites, and carried the people to Jerusalem, the place where God had designed to locate them. Here you have not a general, not a head of an army, but one man who was an army in himself, endued with superhuman strength, capable of superhuman deeds; and yet showing that where often there is the greatest physical strength, there may be vacillation of moral principle that no physical strength can compensate for.

It is also needful to explain, that several of the expressions here need to be perhaps slightly modified to be truly translated; and secondly, that habits require to be explained, in order to justify some of the incidents that are here recorded.

It is said here, first of all, that "Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up, and told his father and his mother." So far his conduct was beautiful; he consulted them before he took a step so momentous as that which he proposed. But his fault was, that he did not take or seek for a wife

a daughter of his own people, a worshipper of the true and the living God; he preferred to have a daughter of the Philistines, who were heathens, and hostile to all the habits and worship of the children of Israel.

It seems strange that he should have said to his father and mother, "Get her for me to wife." The explanation is, that in Eastern and ancient nations the father and mother sought out the husband for the wife, and the wife for the husband; and in that momentous compact the parties chiefly concerned had a very subordinate part indeed to play. This appears to us very absurd, but it was so; and in Eastern countries it remains so to a very great extent still.

His father and his mother, whom he properly consulted, being a very young man, a mere youth, made the very just reflection, "Is there no woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, who can charm thee, and whom thou wouldest take as thy wife, instead of going to the Philistines?" But Samson said, "Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well!" This reply of his would seem to indicate that it was merely pleasure or gratification from her appearance; but perhaps the exact rendering of the Hebrew is, "For she is a righteous one, and is the right one notwithstanding;" and it seems to imply that he had some prophetic or celestial inspiration that convinced him that he did what was either the mind or the purpose of God, and was not guided by mere sight, or sense, or impression when he chose this woman to be his wife. The evidence of this is, if he had merely been pleased by her beauty, his father and mother would have said, "That ought not to prevail

against far more weighty reasons." But instead of that it is added that his father and mother knew not, or they would not have objected, that this was of the Lord; that there was a great end and object to be accomplished by it; and that he was really making arrangements, through that strange and mysterious choice, for dealing the Philistines a more destructive blow than the generals and judges that had preceded him had ever inflicted upon them. "Marriage connexions with the Philistines, who were not of the devoted nations, were not indeed prohibited to the Israelites by the *letter* of the law, though by its *spirit* they undoubtedly were. The danger of being enticed to idolatry was the reason of the law as it respected alliances with the Canaanites, and this reason we cannot but suppose was equally applicable to connexions with the Philistines. Still the law was merely ceremonial, and if God saw fit to dispense with it in regard to any of his servants, he could do so unimpeached. That this was the case in the present instance, there are strong grounds to believe from the actual event. At least, we do not feel at liberty, from a view of the facts recorded, to pronounce positively a sentence of condemnation on this part of Samson's conduct. But whatever judgment we may form of the measure on the whole, his mode of procedure was in one respect highly deserving of commendation. He took no step towards forming the connexion, not even so much as paying his addresses to her, without first making his parents acquainted with the matter, and obtaining their consent. In his example we read an admonition that addresses itself to all children in similar circumstances. Next to the sanction of Heaven,

the concurrence of parents is requisite to render that relation a source of comfort and happiness to the parties concerned. Consulting them is consulting our own welfare, as well as acting up to the spirit of the divine injunction in the fifth commandment."

Accordingly, Samson went down, and his father and mother went with him; satisfied at least that there was a reason for it. "And he came," it is said, "to the vineyards of Timnath; and, behold, a young lion roared against him." A young lion, in the Hebrew, does not mean a lion a very few weeks or a very few months old; but a lion fully grown, in full vigour and strength—young as contrasted with old age, and debilitated by years. "And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid." It must have been strength altogether beyond precedent or parallel that enabled him to do so. I may mention, we have a sort of shadow, projected from the history of Samson into heathendom, that is an indirect proof of the reality of this. In the labours of Hercules you have just the traditional account of the labours of Samson. It is merely tradition's version of what inspiration had previously given. And it is a very interesting fact, that you will find the most corroborative proofs of the main facts in this volume by reading the mythology of the heathen, all of which is a corrupted and distorted traditional explanation of what was actual fact.

He went down, "and talked with the woman." Now here again the Hebrew requires a rendering somewhat different. "He went down and talked about the woman," for he would not, even in betrothal, have

been allowed to address her face to face, according to the customs of that day. It is, he talked about her, asked after her conduct, her domestic habits, her whole worth. And then, when he was satisfied, it is said, "She pleased Samson well."

Then no doubt she was betrothed; and in ancient times it was the law that the husband should be betrothed to the wife for twelve months before marriage; and during that time they very seldom saw each other; but the compact was so real and so indissoluble that it was regarded as binding as if the actual marriage had taken place. And this will clear up a difficulty about the lion and the bees; which it is necessary to recollect, in order to see the consistency of it. "He turned aside to see the carcase of the lion." It was not so much the carcase, as the wreck, or remains, or *débris* of the lion. Then there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase. It is absolutely certain that it could not have been the decaying body of the lion, but that it must have been the bones or skeleton; the whole flesh having been wasted by time and weather, the bones being left perfectly clean. You will find in the woods and forests, the bones of animals clear and clean as it is possible to make them. It is quite plain that the bees could never have built in the dead body of the lion; it is contrary to all their instincts and habits. It was, therefore, amid the bones, polished and cleansed by wind, and rain, and weather, and other agencies, that they made themselves a hive. But you say, How could this have happened in so short a time? The answer is, The first visit was the betrothal, and, going to the betrothal, he killed the lion; the second

visit was going to the marriage, which was twelve months after; and a twelvemonths' wind and weather, you may depend upon it, would have polished the bones of any lion left dead upon the fields or in the woods. "And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat; but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase, or wreck, or *débris*, or bones of the lion." "Whilst Samson concealed the event from others, he pondered it in himself; and when he returned to Timnath, went out of the way to see his dead adversary, and could not but recall to himself his danger and deliverance; 'Here the beast met me; thus he fought; thus I slew him!' The very dead lion taught Samson thankfulness. The mercies of God are ill-bestowed upon us, if we cannot step aside to view the monuments of his deliverances. As Samson had not found his honeycomb, if he had not turned aside to see his lion, so we shall lose the comfort of God's benefits, if we do not renew our perils by meditation."—*Bishop Hall*.

"So his father went down unto the woman; and Samson made there a feast;" that is, at the marriage, "for so used the young men to do." And he had thirty companions; these were called, as is seen in the New Testament, the friends of the bridegroom, who went to rejoice with him. Samson put forth a riddle, according to Eastern custom. We should not object to such a trivial incident, for there depends upon it a subsequent story, of very great moment in the main narrative. Besides, if there be a full picture given of his conduct, we should

not object to some of the minuter things that are placed in the background, that do not seem very important, but still are necessary to make up the harmony of the whole. "If ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments." The expression "sheets" is certainly not correct; it is the Hebrew word סדינים, *sedinim*, from which comes the Greek word, σινδων, which means "very fine linen." Literally it is, "I will give you thirty pieces of fine linen and changes of garment." "But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty pieces of linen and thirty change of garments."

"*Thirty sheets and thirty change of garments.* The original word סדינים *sedinim*, from which comes the Greek σινδων, *sinдон*, *fine linen*, probably denotes a kind of body linen, more like our *shirts* than *sheets*. 'It cannot easily be imagined they were what we call sheets, for Samson might have slain thirty Philistines near Askelon, and not have found one sheet; or if he slew them who were carrying their beds with them on their travels, as they often do in present times, the slaughter of fifteen had been sufficient, for in the East, as in other countries, every bed is provided with two sheets; but he slew just thirty, in order to obtain thirty *sedinim*, or shirts. If this meaning of the term be admitted, the deed of Samson must have been very provoking to the Philistines; for since only people of more easy circumstances wore shirts, they were not thirty of the common people that he slew, but thirty persons of figure and consequence. The same word is used by the prophet Isaiah, in his description of the

'splendid and costly dress in which people of rank and fashion then delighted, rendered in our translation "fine linen;" which seems to place it beyond a doubt that they were persons of rank that fell by the hand of Samson on that occasion."—*Paxton*.

And they said, satisfied they had skill to do it, "Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it. And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." Now the Hebrew word for strong is used exactly like the Latin word *acer*; the meaning of *acer* is not merely "strong;" we read, indeed, in Latin, *acerrimus leo*, "a very powerful or brave lion;" but the word *acer* also means "bitter," "sharp," "sour." And you will see, therefore, how it is a sort of pun almost upon the word. He says, "Out of the eater came forth meat; out of the sour (also strong) came forth sweetness." You can see, therefore, the parallelism, how complete it is. And they could not expound it. Well, on the seventh day, it is said, they went to Samson's wife. Now, mark how the drama unfolds itself. He had married a woman of the Philistines, believing it was right, although wrong in itself, and not justifiable generally; and now he begins to reap the consequences of it. "It came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire." She was a Philistine; her patriotism or love to her country seems to have been at least as strong as her love to her husband; probably she felt a little the fear of vengeance; and accordingly she wept before him—crocodile tears, not genuine tears; trying to make it out that she was

miserable because he kept from her a secret which she ought to know; and construing it most wickedly and in thorough hypocrisy, she said, "Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not; thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me." The word "my," indicates the cause of her inquiry, and teaches him the error of his having married a woman of the Philistines. "And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother;" that affection being very strong, and very properly so. But she wept before him seven days. How persistent was this woman; how skillful, how talented! evidently a person of consummate skill, determined perseverance; she wept before him whilst the feast lasted. And at last, the poor man could stand it no longer; with all his physical strength he was morally weak,—vacillated and gave way, and told her the riddle. Now, it has been very often said, that even cabinet secrets leak out in this way, and that there is no such thing as a secret possible as long as there is a woman anxious to obtain possession of it.

"And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?" And he said to them, very properly, "If you had not used my home, and the influence of a wife, you would never have found out my riddle."

SAMSON'S VENGEANCE.

CHAPTER XV.

SAMSON'S WIFE WITHHELD. MARRIAGE IN THE LORD. SAMSON'S REVENGE. FOXES AND FIREBRANDS. CORN-FIELDS DESTROYED. SAMSON BOUND. BONDS BURST. PHILISTINES SLAUGHTERED WITH THE JAW-BONE OF AN ASS. RAMATH-LEHI.

I STATED in the course of my explanatory remarks on the previous chapter, that instead of a judge, an ordinary man of great intelligence, at the head of thousands of warriors and soldiers, we have here as it were an army compressed into one, and the strength of the many made the prerogative and the possession of one. There may be something coarser, but there is nothing more extraordinary, in a man conquering by great physical might, than in a victorious general, conquering by great and gifted attributes of mind. Strength of mind is a nobler thing; but strength of body in these times may have been an attribute that had its value, and that was not unworthy of being enlisted in the great mission which was committed to the children of Israel, namely, which we must never forget, to extirpate the whole aboriginal inhabitants of Canaan, and to take it in possession for themselves and theirs. God raised up in previous instances a Joshua, a brave, skilful, and

victorious soldier ; he raised up, again, Jephthah, whose story is so intensely interesting and peculiar ; and here he raised up a man endued with prodigious strength, protected by God's ceaseless presence, and sent and enabled by God's strength to execute, in some degree, an earnest of that retribution which was to come, and ought sooner to have come, upon the debased, and guilty, and criminal population that previously occupied the land of Canaan.

In this chapter we read that, not supposing that the father of his wife would have taken her from him and given her to another,—that is, to the friend of the bridegroom,—and wishing to see her in the harem, the place in which the women in Eastern countries still and in ancient times then were accustomed to meet ; he found that her father would not suffer him even to see her, and, with true Philistine morality, offered him the sister instead of the wife, whom he had disposed of after his own taste. You will see a moral retribution running through all this. He married a woman of the Philistines against his duty, against the will of the nation, the church, and the people whose avenger he had become ; and he now begins to taste the bitter fruits of a marriage not, as the Apostle requires it, “in the Lord,” but dictated and decided by his own passion and preference, instead of solemn and holy principle. And, accordingly, as he had mingled in family connexion with people that hated the living and the true God, the almost universal result begins to ensue, either that he is contaminated by their principles, or his married life is a thorn in the flesh that lasts till the very day of his death. It is a lesson that one ought never to omit to inculcate : all marriages should be, as the Apostle says, in the Lord.

That does not mean, merely, that you are not to go to Gretna Green, or to be married according to a Christian formula, right and proper as this is ; it means that a Christian is to marry only one that is a Christian. Other things may be elements in your decision, but they must not be governing ones. The beauty of her person, the exquisite nature of her taste, wealth, privilege, family distinction—all may each in its place be an element with which nobody has anything to do but yourself; but the crowning element must be that she is a Christian, fears God, believes in his Son, and lives justly, and soberly, and righteously in this world, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of Christ our Saviour. And it is the superseding or ignoring of this vital principle, that accounts for much of the social demoralization and unhappiness that prevail in the world. If Samson, a Hebrew, will marry a Philistine, Samson's biography will present proof of the consequences that naturally flow, and must be expected to flow, from this act. And the singular fact is, when a person marries another of an opposite creed, to take another aspect of the question, it is rare that you find the wrong creed eventually become the right one ; the fact, in nine instances out of ten is, that the professor of the right creed becomes the victim of the wrong one ; or there takes place what is as bad, a compromise, as in the case of the Protestant husband that married a Roman Catholic wife. They constantly quarrelled on religion, they therefore agreed upon a compromise ; they embraced Unitarianism, which was certainly a great concession upon both sides ; whether it was an advantage to the everlasting prospects of either, eternity alone can decide.

We then read that Samson was resolved—mark you, because he had tasted the very cup that he himself had consented to accept—to execute vengeance upon those who had mingled it for him. It does not say that God commanded him to act thus; many things are recorded as facts in the Bible which are not applauded by God, or meant to be precedents for us. Samson was raised up to exterminate the Philistines; but he did not make God's command, but his own private pique or wrath, in many instances, the reason of the greatest slaughter that he inflicted upon them. Accordingly, it is said, he caught three hundred foxes. He could not himself have caught three hundred in one day; but very often in Scripture a leader is said to do a thing which he does through instruments. We say the Duke of Wellington gained the victory of Waterloo; it does not mean that he alone did it; while he was the leading and guiding power, yet it was through others, that is, his troops. So it is said often in Scripture a person does a thing, when he does it through the medium or the instrumentality of servants, friends, or persons employed by him. He therefore secured, or caught, three hundred foxes. The Hebrew word rendered fox means, rather, the jackal. The fox is not a gregarious animal; but these evidently were gregarious. And then, by a piece of very wicked and questionable ingenuity, he fastened their tails together, with fire-brands, or torches it might be translated, between them, so that the creatures would not be able to run to their accustomed holes and hiding places; but, struggling to escape the one from the other, would run through the corn-fields, and set fire to the corn of the Philistines, and thus destroy the food that was to be their support for the ensuing year. What-

ever may be the merit of the scheme, or whatever may be the morality of the scheme, it is not set down as a precedent for you, but a fact in the biography of Samson; and Scripture does not state everything as precedent, but many things as beacons, all things always and everywhere as facts.

"A *firebrand*, in such a position, if sufficiently ignited to kindle a blaze in the shocks of corn, would soon have burnt itself free from the tails of the foxes, or have been extinguished by being drawn over the ground. A torch or flambeau, on the other hand, made of resinous wood or artificial materials, being more tenacious of flame, would have answered a far better purpose, and such is the legitimate import of the original.—*And turned tail to tail*. This was doubtless intended to prevent them from making too rapid a retreat to their holes, or, indeed, from going to their holes at all. They were probably not so tied that they should pull in different directions, but that they might run deviously and slowly, side by side, and so do the more effectual execution. Had he put a torch to the tail of each, the creature, naturally terrified at fire, would instantly have betaken itself to its hole or some place of retreat, and thus the design of Samson would have been wholly frustrated. But by tying two of them together by the tail they would frequently thwart each other in running, and thus cause the greater devastation. If it be asked why Samson resorted to such an expedient at all, instead of firing the corn-fields with his own hand, which would have been a much simpler and easier method of compassing his object, we may say perhaps in reply, that by the meanness and weakness of the instruments employed he designed to put a more signal contempt

upon the enemies with whom he contended, thus mingling ridicule with revenge."

We read that when the Philistines heard this, they resolved to punish Samson by destroying his wife and her father. You see the moral retribution again coming up. Samson was punished, as recorded at the beginning of the chapter; and now the wife, who had acted so unfaithfully, and the father, who had acted so criminally, are both involved in the same severe and dreadful retribution.

And Samson, it is said, determined to be avenged; and therefore smote them hip and thigh, as it were, completely; it means, leaving not one behind, with a great slaughter, and went to the top of Mount Etam.

Then the men of Judah—and this shows how debased they had become—instead of maintaining a bold front of opposition to the Philistines, and prosecuting the mission intrusted to them, namely, to extirpate them, had come to terms with them, and submitted to the yoke of that very race whom they, out of false compassion, spared; when, out of duty to God, they ought to have extirpated them. These Hebrews, then, resolved to bind Samson, in order to keep their masters quiet. They had lost all patriotism; they had lost all sense of duty, and morality; all heroism of mind, all purity of heart: and therefore they were prepared at any price to have peace with their masters, and no longer to give them occasion to insult over them. They therefore seized, or rather sought the submission of, their greatest benefactor; bound him with cords, intending to hand him over to the Philistines, to do with him as they pleased. On their doing so, he burst the cords as if they had been flax that had been

exposed to the flame, and showed the prodigious physical strength with which he was endued in the providence of God. And then, as if to show the greater degradation of the Philistines, and to make the instrument with which he destroyed them a memorial of their shame, he took the jaw-bone, the new jaw-bone—that is, not decayed, but retaining great strength in it—of an ass; and with that mean instrument, so mean as to make the memory of the slain ignoble and degraded by the recollection of it,—he slew a thousand men. And then he called the place where he threw it down Ramath-lehi.

Then, being thirsty, and expecting to die of thirst, and to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised, we read that God heard his prayer, and clave a hollow place—not, as in our translation, in the “jaw-bone.” The Hebrew word *lehi* means a jaw-bone, and the place where he threw down the jaw-bone, as recorded in the 17th verse, was called Ramath-lehi; and where God clave a fountain was not in the jaw-bone, as our translation seems to imply, but in the place in which he threw down the jaw-bone, namely, on the ground. The fountain was hollowed out by the hand of God, and thence came water. And he called the name of the place, most beautifully, En-hakkor; namely, “The place provided for him that called upon his God;” “and it is in Lehi unto this day.”

The chapter that follows will show the closing catastrophe which alike visited the sins of Samson, and brought down dreadful retribution upon that race who had made him their laughing-stock and their scorn.

DELILAH'S SUCCESS AND SAMSON'S DEATH.

CHAPTER XVI.

VARIOUS TALENTS. SEAT OF SAMSON'S STRENGTH. SINS OF CHARACTERS IN SCRIPTURE. DELILAH. SHE SEEKS OUT THE SECRET OF HIS STRENGTH. SAMSON'S EVASIONS.

"Then went Samson to Gaza.—This place was the capital and the most important of the five Philistine principalities, and was situated about fifteen miles south of Ascalon, sixty miles south-west from Jerusalem, and between two and three miles from the sea. It was a very ancient city, and is always spoken of in the Old Testament as a place of great importance. In more modern times it has undergone a great variety of changes, occasioned by the fortunes of war, till at present it has declined to a trading village of some three or four thousand inhabitants. It stands upon a hill of about two miles' circumference at the base, surrounded by valleys, and overlooking a prospect of much beauty. Environed by and interspersed with gardens and plantations of olive and date-trees, the town has a picturesque appearance, to which its numerous elegant minarets not a little contribute. The buildings being mostly of stone, and the streets moderately broad, the interior answers expectation better than most other towns of Syria, and affords accommodations far superior to most places in Egypt. The

suburbs, however, are composed of miserable mud huts ; but all travellers concur with Sandys, in admiring the variety and richness of the vegetable productions, both wild and cultivated, of the environs. The inhabitants have manufactures of cotton and soap, but derive their principal support from the commerce between Egypt and Syria, which must all pass this way. Scarcely any of its ancient remains are now to be found. Those of which travellers gave an account a century or two ago have nearly all disappeared.—The real motive by which Samson was prompted in this visit to Gaza, it is vain to attempt to discover. We can scarcely, however, from the sequel resist the impression that his spiritual affections had suffered a serious decline.”

We have endeavoured to explain the previous chapters, which contain the earliest biography of this most extraordinary, but in some degree not uninteresting character. God raised up at this time, for the deliverance of the people of Israel from the hand of the Philistines, various characters. We have the soldier, the lawgiver, leading them to the margin of the promised land ; we had others who were warriors, others who were wise ; and in this instance one—to use a phrase that had properly its origin in him, though it has drifted into Paganism—that had Herculean strength, and whose name has become associated in all languages with the greatest physical strength ever possessed by man. Now the idea, perhaps, that God designs to show in this most wondrous book, the Bible, in this perfect reflection of all the lights and shadows, all the incidents and features of humanity, is that all sorts of talent may be sanctified to his service, and all sorts of talent also desecrated and destroyed for want

SCRIPTURE READINGS.

of grace, and the Holy Spirit of God. There is nothing more extraordinary in a man being raised up as a deliverer gifted with extraordinary physical strength, than there was in a man being raised up as a builder of the temple gifted with extraordinary intellectual wisdom. Solomon was mentally what Samson was physically ; and a lesson that you cannot but gather from both is, that the highest intellectual wisdom, which Solomon had, did not save him from the most debasing vices ; and that the greatest physical strength, which a Samson possessed, did not preserve him from the most degrading sins, and, finally, from a most calamitous and melancholy death. In other words, we have to learn that what man needs to make him wise, happy, and holy, and fit to do good, is not increase of intellectual wisdom, nor increase of physical strength, but increase of that grace which alone teacheth to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.

Now, in the second place, we have to remark respecting Samson, that he was not only endued with physical strength, but he was also protected by a ceaseless presence. His strength was a supernatural gift ; his stature, probably, was not much greater than that of other men. But he was a Nazarite ; the condition of that vow was, that his hair should not be cut off ; and the nature and result of his transgressing that vow was, that his strength should depart the moment he ceased to be loyal to his obligation to his God. Now, the history of his betrayal of the secret of his strength in this chapter, and the mode in which the secret was extorted, is as suggestive as the secret itself, and reads to all men a lesson, fraught with much moral, practical,

and personal instruction. We see one thing very remarkable in Samson—that he was not at all an exemplary moral man. Some persons will quote this, and say, “Why, here is a man in the Bible who is guilty of this sin and that sin;” just as you hear the sceptic—not the real sceptic, who is so from intellectual conviction, but the practical sceptic, who likes to shut out God’s inspection, because his own deeds will not bear it—quote the sins of Samson, the sins of Solomon, and the great sin of David, and say, If these men sinned, why should not we? The answer to that, in the first place, is, that the Bible does not give a profile view of each of its characters, but a full-face view of all its characters. It does not, like a human biographer, magnify the beauties, and tone down almost to the vanishing point the defects; but it sets before you all the portrait of human nature as the Fall has left it, and frequently as grace can transfigure and transform it. And therefore to quote these records of scandalous sins as precedents for us to imitate, or as arguments against the inspiration of the Bible, is really to misquote and misapply them. Besides, to say, “David sinned, therefore I may; Solomon sinned, therefore I may,” is to say, “That ship went too near to the rocks, and foundered on them; I may lead my ship there also. Such a one put his hand into the flame, and he died; I may do the same also.” These sins are given not as precedents, but as beacons; they are the buoys in the channels and floods of time, to show not where the ship may sail, but what the pilot is warned instantly to avoid. And, therefore, to quote beacons and buoys, that indicate peril, as attractions to us, is want of common-sense, as well as want of Christianity.

We read that Samson went to Gaza. His first wife whom he married was destroyed by his infuriated enemies: it seems probable, therefore, that he had married Delilah, a crafty Philistine, very attractive outwardly, no doubt, capable of exercising prodigious influence over him, and showing how feeling can make the strongest man weak as a child. This Delilah, while she loved Samson, it is said loved her country, and loved its bribes still more. They spoke to her, therefore, to extort from Samson what was the secret of his strength. She asked him, and Samson told certainly a succession of scandalous falsehoods, deeply to his discredit and disgrace. You can see much to palliate, and, in fact, wherever human nature has sinned one can see much to pity and deplore, as well as condemn; but never forget that the palliation of any man's conduct is not in any degree the mitigation of any man's sin. We are not, because we pity the victim, for one moment to shrink from denouncing in unsparing terms the crime which taints and defiles him. She worked upon him, and at last he told her, that if he was bound with seven green withes—what was used instead of hemp in those ancient times, being the green withes of the vine, exceedingly strong when twisted together—that thus he would lose his strength. She did so; and she then shouted, "The Philistines be upon thee!" One would have thought that this would have opened his eyes; but it is very singular, when man is under the power of an absorbing passion, that he becomes blind and deaf both together. It is a most solemn fact, that should warn us all, that any one passion allowed to get the supremacy, be it covetousness, or be it that abominable passion which has led to

such terrible crimes, gambling—gambling, that seems to be essentially connected in fact, whether necessary in theory I cannot discuss, with horse-racing—whatever be the passion that gains the absorbing, dominating power, you have no idea at the present moment, in the full possession of your conscience, your feeling of responsibility, your sense of duty, how far it will blind every eyesight, deaden every sensibility, till a man under it will plunge into crimes that, if he had been warned before that he would fall into, he would have said, “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great and horrible thing?” Thus we have disclosed in Samson’s history the awful proof how one passion—a passion, mind you, in its own channel beautiful and holy; a passion that, under the laws and the restraints of the Word of God, is most pure and most ennobling; but broken loose from its restraints, drifted from its anchorage-ground, and running in channels in which it has no right, or law, or accompaniment of God’s presence, it shuts the eyes, and seals the ears, till one under it will plunge into excesses which it would be the height of uncharitableness, so supposed, for one to predict.

In the 9th verse it is said, “There were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber.” The Hebrew word ought not to be translated “with her;” that is absurd when one understands the circumstances. It is, “men lying in wait abiding for her in a chamber;” that is, in an adjoining or contiguous room, waiting for the result of the experiment. “And he brake the withes as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire.” Disappointed again, she pressed him, “Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies; now tell

me, I pray thee." He invented another lie to stave off the evil day, just as a man under heavy debts is always trying to stave off the last issue, by doing something that is discreditable or wrong—anything or everything to adjourn what he knows must come. Delilah, as he now prescribes, took new ropes, and bound him with them, and he burst them again. She then gathered up the seven locks of his hair, which means simply all his hair, as he next proposed, and fastened them to a web, a web joined to the beam. "And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web." "And she pressed him daily with her words." See how persevering she is. Now, if ladies who are district visitors and teachers in Sunday-schools were only as persevering in their noble objects as Delilah was in her wicked one, what a mighty change would take place in this world! How do we explain that men who have a bad end in view exhibit a pertinacity and a perseverance that never falter, but that too many who have a noble and a sublime one exhibit such coldness and apathy?

It is said "she pressed him till his soul was vexed unto death by her persistent entreaties, her eloquent, and touching appeals." Then at last, worn out, weary, tired, able to stand it no more, he let out the secret. Now the secret of his strength was, not that his hair had strength, but his vow was the Nazarite vow, which you recollect he undertook, as we read in the previous chapter; the condition of which was, that as long as he allowed his hair to grow, which a Nazarite was bound to do, and not taste wine, so long this great strength would be in him; but the moment he did what was incompatible with the vow—

shave off his hair—that moment he would become as other men.

At last he fell asleep, it is said, after he had told her; he fell asleep, resting his head upon her knee. I am told by those who have been in India, that you will often see a young man, of eighteen or twenty, —the mother seated on the carpet, not in a chair, as is the case in European latitudes,—lean his head upon his mother's knee, and fall sweetly asleep. Samson, according to Eastern customs, did so; and then they brought a razor and cut off his hair from his head. Some say, How could this be done without his waking? I am told that in India this can be done, and the parties not know it; the sensation being rather soothing and agreeable than the reverse. At all events, from modern facts, what was done here was neither impossible nor improbable. Now then she said, "The Philistines be upon thee. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself," little knowing what a change had taken place; "and he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

Bush well remarks on verses 16, 17. "*When she pressed him daily—he told her all his heart. Alas!* how are the mighty fallen! What an affecting exhibition of the weakness of human nature even in its best estate! Well could Samson now adopt the language of Solomon: 'I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands are bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.' Wearied out by the ceaseless upbraidings of his vile paramour, and enslaved by the violence of his passion,

the fatal secret is at length extorted from him, and the mighty Nazarite remains scarcely a common man ! So perfectly captivated and intoxicated had he become, notwithstanding repeated warnings, by the vehemence of his affection, that, "like the silly dove without heart," he rushed upon his ruin ! Had he not been completely infatuated he would have seen before that no alternative remained to him but to break away at once and at all hazards from the enchantress, and quit the field where it was so evident that he could not keep his ground. But no chains are stronger than those woven by illicit love ; and with him who becomes their prisoner, reputation, life, usefulness, yea, even God's glory, and the salvation of the soul are put to peril in obedience to its unhallowed dictates. But the righteous judgment of God is not to be overlooked in this fearful fall of the champion of Israel. Having so long presumptuously played with his ruin, Heaven leaves him to himself, as a punishment for his former guilty indulgence. He is made to reap as he had sown, and consigned to the hands of his enemies for 'the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.' But it becomes not us to exult over the apostasy of the fallen."

Then, behold the wreck ; his eyes now are taken out—a not uncommon punishment among Eastern savage nations—he is bound with fetters of brass ; he is sitting like a woman, and a slave, grinding corn for the Philistines, in the prison-house. If you want to see this most eloquently delineated, with all the force of which a great poet is capable, read Milton's "Samson Agonistes," which gives the story, enriched and beautified by poetic genius.

Then the lords of the Philistines resolved to do, on their victory, what Christians do not always attempt on theirs—they gave their god, Dagon, all the credit of their success, and they resolved to glorify that god by the destruction of the enemy of their country. Samson is to be made a show. An Eastern house, and especially in ancient times, was built in the form of a quadrangle; there was a court in the middle of the building; one portion of the flat roof jutted out to a wide extent. There were assembled all the aristocracy, and all the soldiers, and men, and great ladies of the Philistines, on the roof, and probably on scaffoldings, erected for the grand exhibition which was to take place of this vanquished strong man turned into ridicule by the Philistines. It has been a matter of great dispute how it was possible that his pulling down the two pillars could upset the whole house. Sir Christopher Wren, the eminent architect, the builder of St. Paul's, was consulted upon this subject by an individual interested in it; and the explanation, that he gave was, that in all probability it was a roof of cedar, that there might have been 100 or 120 enormous beams, of great strength, all meeting at the centre. But as it would be impossible, or very improbable, that any pillar could be found on which all the ends of these beams could rest, as each approached as a radius from the circumference;—that there were two pillars, and an architrave connected with them, and that all the beams met together upon this short architrave, sustained by two pillars, each beam coming from the circumference of the vast building; that then Samson stood between the pillars on which the architrave was; his strength restored by his repentance, not merely by

the growth of his hair, and by his acknowledgment of his sin in the sight of God; he bowed himself—the language being extremely beautiful and simple—with all his might, upsetting the main pillars, and the house fell. “So the dead that he slew at his death were more than they that he slew in his life.” Now, some one will say, “Was not this suicide?” No; not at all. His mission, and the mission of Israel was, to extirpate all the inhabitants of that land; his duty was to do so; he risked his life just as the soldier risks his in the battle; and he only did at his death what, from his own unfaithfulness, he was not able to do in his life.

“With arms extended he grasps the massy pillars, and feeling an answer to his prayer in the renewed strength bestowed upon him, he bends himself forward with all his force; the pillars rock, the building totters; the roof, encumbered with the weight of the spectators, rushes down, and death in every tremendous shape appears. Crushed under the load, or dashed to pieces in the fall, thousands expire. Their music is now changed to dying groans; and shrieks of agonizing pain, instead of songs of triumph, fill the air. Thus dies the mighty Samson, triumphant in his fall, and more terrible to the Philistines in his death than even during his life. Who can in this but be reminded of that adorable Saviour, who ‘triumphed over principalities and powers upon the cross, and by death overcame him that had the power of death, and delivered those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage?’

“Then his brethren . . . came down and took him. The overwhelming catastrophe which has destroyed

the lives of so many of the lords and inferior rulers of the people, seems to have been such a crush to the Philistine power, that they troubled Israel no more for several years, and did not even attempt to hinder Samson's relations from taking away and burying his dead body. It was selected out from heaps of the slain, brought honourably to his own country, and interred in the sepulchre of his fathers.

"Thus terminates the history of one of the most remarkable personages that ever distinguished the annals of the Jewish or any other people. We may learn from it that great gifts are often connected with great imperfections. The champion of Israel possessed courage and strength, and did signal service to his country in contending with its enemies; but he had little self-government, and affords a melancholy proof how little corporeal prowess avails when judgment and prudence are wanting; and how dangerous, in fact, are all such gifts in the hands of any one who has not his passions under proper discipline, and the fear of God continually before his eyes. While as a Nazarite he was careful to abstain from strong drink, he took little heed to cultivate that purity of sentiment and conduct which is a crown to every other excellence, and the want of which never fails to sully the lustre of the brightest characters. It may here be remarked, that from the history of Samson it is generally supposed was derived that of the Hercules of the pagan mythology; and M. De Lavour, an ingenious French writer, has drawn out the parallel at full length, an abridgment of which may be seen in Dr. A. Clark's commentary."

THE LORD DEPARTED.

CHAPTER XVI.

‘And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.’

JUDGES XVI. 20.

I shall find, by a reference to a previous chapter, that it was by the Spirit of the Lord upon him that Samson was enabled to do some of his greatest exploits. And in speaking of the different Judges we read, for instance, “The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah;” “The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson;” “The Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times.” Therefore I infer, that the Lord mentioned in the text is the Third Person in the blessed and glorious Trinity; that Holy Spirit by whom the believer is still strengthened, sanctified, renewed, made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. That blessed Spirit is constantly referred to in the New Testament as the author and the fountain of all that can make holy upon earth, or prepare to become happy when earth is renewed. It is by him we are convinced of sin, by him we are sanctified, by him we are comforted. We read that he is our guide; that in vain a Saviour has died unless that blessed Spirit teach us; teach the heart, as the preacher teaches the outward ear, the excellency, the adaptation,

and the glory of what that Saviour is, and has done, and suffered and sacrificed for us. The departure of this Spirit is desolation to the heart, destruction to the soul; the presence of this Spirit dwelling in a man's heart is the true and living element of Christian character. A Christian not only believes a dogma, but feels a life; Christianity is not a creed outside, but a living inspiration within. It is not enough to believe what is orthodox, or to do what is outwardly good; it is necessary—and, mark the words—that a man should be born again of the Spirit of God before he can see the kingdom of heaven.

This clause, occurring amid the incidents of the biography of Samson, has suggested the few following plain, practical remarks, the enunciation of which I pray the Spirit to bless to each of us. What are the signs and evidences of the departure of the Holy Spirit of God? It is possible for that Spirit to forsake us, and we not to know it. What are some of the plain, unmistakable signs that a great change for the worse has taken place; that the Spirit of God either never was in us, or, provoked, vexed, grieved, has forsaken the temple, and left it a ruin; has departed from the altar, and left all its glory to expire? I will enumerate a series of evidences: no one alone is conclusive proof that the Spirit has left us; but if all that I shall specify, connected and collected, be the characteristics of any one, the presumption is too strong that the Spirit has departed from him. It is like circumstantial evidence in a trial; one fact is not conclusive of the guilt or innocence of the accused, but all the facts, and links, and circum-

stances connected together, become, in the judgment of an enlightened jury, conclusive of innocence or guilt. No one thing here specified is in itself conclusive, but all taken together ought neither to be forgotten nor unimproved.

The first symptom of the departing is a lessening sense of the reality and weight of everlasting things. No token is more unpromising than that of time growing greater, and eternity seeming less in our horizon; and the things of this world outweighing, in our estimate, the things of the world to come; when our heart is grovelling more on the earth, and our treasure is felt less and less to be in the world to come; when we labour only to increase our influence on earth, to conciliate the world's *éclat*, and enjoy its good things, till finally we say, "Soul, take thine ease; thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry." That is a most ominous sign of a departing glory; it is like the footfall of the great Inhabitant within, bidding farewell to the house that has become too carnal, sensuous, and earthly for his holy presence.

Another sign of a departing Spirit is our walking less by faith, and walking more by feeling;—when your motives drawn from religion are feebler; when hopes that spring from its bosom become much dimmer; when the visible, the palpable, the audible, and the guide-posts of this world are alone in your feeling solid, and the great things of another evaporate in your imagination into dreams and fancies, too transcendental to be turned to practical account: when you carry this feeling into the sanctuary, it shows itself in craving for what the eye can see, for what the ear can

hear, for increase of sensuous splendour and material beauty, until at length the song takes the place of the psalm, form takes the place of prayer, and the bowed knee and the uplifted eye the place of the bowed heart and the adoring spirit. We so far cease to walk by faith, we begin to walk by sense and sight; and this, in its place, is another presumption or evidence of a departing Lord.

A third evidence is, less appreciation of God's Holy Word. Once it was to you sweeter than honey; once it was like a mine stored with seams of precious gold; its promises were sweet music, its prospects blessed hopes, and you could say, "I count it more precious than gold; yea, sweeter than honey from the honeycomb." What is the reason that now the novel seems to supersede the Bible; the beautiful and romantic tale, the thrilling narratives of the sacred oracles of God? How is it that now you read the Bible as a duty you dare not postpone, but no longer as a sweet delight that you enjoy and earnestly long for? How is it that now, what was to you the lamp to your feet and the light to your path, has come to be the light of a nook or of a corner; a lesson suitable to the Sunday, but a directory no longer consulted in the week? Oh, God forbid that this ceasing to love, to appreciate, to dig into that deep mine, to taste of this precious provision, should be, though you wist not, the sign of the departure of the Holy Spirit of God!

Another evidence is thrown up when public worship ceases to be what in your esteem it once was. Was there not a day—I appeal to your recollection—when you could say, "A day in thy courts is better than a

thousand;" when no shower, nor storm, nor distance, nor transient ache, durst be pleaded as an apology for absence from the house of God? Was there not a day once when its psalms were the sweetest strains that angels ever pealed from heaven; when the simplest sermon was to you the most instructive? Does there not seem to have passed upon you a change? Do you not say, "I would like more flowers in the sermon, in order that I may be charmed; more stimulus in it, in order that my attention may be arrested"? Whenever a man does not like plain food, and needs many condiments, it is the sign of impaired health. Whenever a person does not admire the simple, the severe, which is the highest beauty, but needs to have flowers and splendid decorations, there is the evidence of a departing glory. What explains a great deal of the elaborate ecclesiastical ornaments that are so popular? It is man's heart, conscious of the exodus of the living beauty, and trying to substitute for it, and to fill its place by a sensuous, material, and mediæval glory. There is no sign more ominous than when you cannot take simple food. How expressive is the language of Peter: "As new-born babes desire the sincere, undiluted milk of the word, that ye may live thereby." Is the sanctuary still attractive; is the sermon, with all its faults, still an instructive lesson; is public prayer still a conscious privilege? and, if you must sacrifice, would you not rather give up your box at the Opera than give up the humblest and remotest sitting in the house of God, where you can hear, and love, and drink in the sweet sounds of everlasting life?

Another evidence of something going wrong is,

when the Sabbath begins to lose its charms. The sun still gilds the Sabbath with all its ancient glory; the consecration of the day still lasts and lives. Was there not a time when you longed for Saturday, because it ushered in the Sabbath; when the week-days felt shorter, and their drudgery felt lighter, because there was a day on which the humblest peasant and the highest peer might meet together on the same floor, and feel, "The Lord is the Father and the Maker of us all"? Was there not a time when the Sabbath was to you the most attractive, the most beautiful of all the days of the week; and, instead of being a dull, gloomy, miserable, puritanic day, as caricaturists would represent it, it was to you a day of sunshine, of joyous emotions; when you met your Father, felt and realized your noblest freedom, and drank in from the fountain of life joys unutterable and full of glory? Has it changed? Must you now have something to urge it to pass over with greater speed? Do you long to have on the Sabbath the evening party for dissipation, frivolity, and secular converse? Do you feel now the necessity of music in the Park, as well as praise in the sanctuary? Has there a change taken place in your experience of that blessed day? It is not the Sabbath that is altered; it is you.

When persons leave a place of worship they say, "Oh, the preacher has grown so dull!" and when they do not wish to go to church on Sunday they say, "Oh, the Sabbath is now such a heavy day; it is not what it once used to be!" And when they excuse themselves for not reading the Bible, they say, "The Bible is getting behind the age; we cannot enjoy it as we would." It is not the Bible that is behind the age,

it is not the Sabbath that has become dull, it may not be the preacher that has become uninstructional; but your hearts that have gone wrong, and the Spirit departing from you, and you "wist not" that it is so.

In all these respects do you feel a great change passing upon you, or passing on the spiritual things that once seemed so beautiful and felt so interesting? If a man be in a fever he is restless; the quack or the empiric called in, changes the patient's bed, and thinks the patient will be easier: the true physician looks upon it as a symptom of disease, and sets his skill to work to cure the patient's disease. When the Spirit begins to depart, you will find them going from church to chapel, from chapel to church, from this preacher to that preacher, from that preacher to this preacher; a Puritan to-day, a Puseyite to-morrow, a Baptist perhaps the third day; not knowing that it is not the patient's ecclesiastical position that wants a change, but the patient's heart that wants to be restored and renewed by the Holy Spirit of God.

Another evidence of a departing presence of the Spirit of God is, when prosperity comes unsanctified to those on whom in the providence of God it is bestowed. I know no curse more corroding or terrible upon earth than unsanctified prosperity. That man who has ceaseless health, and feels not thankfulness for it; to whom God adds blessing after blessing, while there is no responsibility for the proper use of it; who is made more rich, but becomes less liberal; whose blessings multiply, while his charities lessen and decrease; who grasps the gift, and forgets or fails to thank the Giver—furnishes all but irresistible proof that either the Spirit of God never was in his

heart, or if that Spirit strove with him, that he is departing from him, though he know it not.

Another proof is insensibility and apathy under affliction. Are you afflicted with sickness, painful losses, decay of property, difficulties, perplexities, fears within and fightings without? What is your course? Is it merely to resort to more desperate expedients to right yourself, or is it to seek direction from God? On this decision depends the force and application of the symptom. He whose mercies bring him to God in praise, whose trials draw him to God in prayer, shows that he is indeed a child of God; but he whose prosperity blinds him to his benefactor, and whose adversity makes him only murmur, fret, and it may be blaspheme, gives too strong evidence, whether he know it or not, that the Lord is departing from him.

Next to this, the evanescence of all deep, solemn, and religious impressions is one of the strongest proofs that Satan is watching at the heart, picking up the good seed as it falls, and leaving it harder than it was before. Are you sometimes awakened, under the preaching of the Gospel, by a solemn sense of responsibility? Are you at times so impressed with the claims, the reality of living religion, that you are at once resolved to begin to pray, and to live as candidates for glory? But no sooner have you left the sanctuary than the impression departs, the deep feeling is dispersed; like Felix, you put it off to a "convenient season;" or, like Agrippa, you own that you are "almost a Christian;" but it is only to return to the world, and to plunge deeper into its follies, or drink deeper of its springs, in order to get rid of an

impression that, cherished, fostered, and prayed over, might have been the pioneer of your entrance into everlasting glory.

Not the least of the signs of a departing glory is the adoption of deadly error. We all feel that orthodoxy is the result of argument: certainly the purest and severest logic will lead to the conclusions that are commonly called orthodoxy. But man's heart has far more to do with his creed than his intellect; and what we need to make us evangelical Christians is, not increase of light, but increase of transforming grace from the Holy Spirit of God. What explains the errors that predominate in the present day? The Lord departing from many, and they know it not. What does the Apostle say in the Thessalonians? "Wherefore he shall give them up to strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." When men are dissatisfied with God's truth they begin to listen to its opponents, or to those that profess to explain away all the difficulties of true religion; they imitate the conduct of him who is described so graphically by the Psalmist, when he says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Let us mark, first, the ungodly; men that are most upright in their conduct, but neither fear, nor love, nor worship God. The next descent is "sinners"—those that are ungodly and practise sin. Then the last class is "the scornful"—those that mock at all things. And you will notice now the downward progress; first he *walks* in the counsel of the ungodly—he would not dare venture to sit down; next of all he *stands* in the way of sinners; and, lastly, he *sits down*

in the seat of the scornful ; where you have the declensions step by step, until irresistible proof is presented by the individual that the Lord has departed from him, though he knows it not.

Another evidence of the departure of the Spirit from the human heart is the rapid growth of unholy and impure affections. The natural heart is a fertile soil, but fertile in the growth of those hateful and poisonous lusts, envy, malice, hatred, ill-will, and all uncharitableness. These may be repressed by the force or management of man ; but they can only be rooted out, cast away, left to walk in the bleak places of the world by the Spirit of God. What was Judas ? The ultimate development of covetousness. What were Felix and Agrippa but the full culmination of a dominant sin ? What was Demas ? The product of intense worldliness. And, therefore, whenever God leaves a man to himself, when he says of any one, " Let him alone," all the seeds that were in the human heart not crushed or utterly eradicated assume a preternatural force, grow up into awful harvests of sin ; and eternity is the ceaseless reaping of what sin has sown in the years of time.

Another painful evidence is, indifference to the cause and the spread of the kingdom of Christ. Whenever men begin to feel so selfish that they ask, " Am I my brother's keeper ? " then their class is with Cain, not with Abel. Once, perhaps, you were zealous for the circulation of the Bible, for the spread of the Gospel, for doing good in your neighbourhood ; now you begin to say, " Well, I was then very excited ; it was enthusiasm, it was fanaticism, it was extreme passion. I will now try to be more sober-minded."

It may be, that your passion has become consolidated into principle ; it may be, that what was then an enthusiastic adoption may now be a deliberate course of action : and, if so, it is no sign of a departing glory. But if it be the very reverse, that your love has cooled, that your sympathy with others has gone, then it is the evidence of the Spirit of God having departed from you.

Another evidence, and only two more I will state, is, quarrels and dissensions among those who are walking previously in the same way, believe the same creed, and profess to be candidates for the same approaching glory. I know no evidence of a carnal church more decided than this, that we find ministers and followers of Christ quarrel, dispute, and indulge in acrimonious language, the one in reference to the other. When Paul refers to the Corinthians he says : " One saith, I am of Paul ; another, I am of Apollos ; another, I am of Cephas : are ye not carnal ? Was Paul crucified for you ? Were ye baptized in the name of Cephas ? " So in the present day when Christian men quarrel, and often the quarrel becomes fierce as the matter becomes a trifle about which they quarrel, it is the evidence not of that pristine state when the world said, " How these Christians love one another ! " but it is the evidence that the Spirit of peace, grieved at the spectacle, is leaving desolate the temple in which he dwelt, and the glory is about to be quenched on the altar, and " Ichabod " to be written upon the door and lintels of the temple.

Finally, there takes place, as the crowning result of all these signs and symptoms of a departing God, complete and entire apostasy from the truth as it is

in Christ Jesus. Many a sceptic, if he would be candid, could trace his scepticism to the passion he once indulged. Many a worldling, who has been perverted to idolatrous superstition, could trace his perversion, if he had the candour to own it, to his tampering with God's holy and precious truth. And hence all those schemes that have been started in modern times for reconciling things that are diametrically opposed, are to be received and listened to with extremest caution. For my part, I do in my conscience believe, that if the children in the schools of England were only well drilled in Scriptural theology, we should not have had the fearful crop of deadly error which has made such havoc. And then those continual perversions from the truth are sad: why so masterly a mind as that of Newman perverted to the puerilities of Rome? Why has so gentle and genial a spirit as Archdeacon Manning become a pervert to the Roman apostasy? My belief is, that they had tampered with the truth, that they had played false to the solemn rebukes of conscience; and, after a time of tortuous, perplexing, inconsistent controversy with themselves, God gave them up to strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. But I have often entertained the hope that such a spirit as Newman's, such an amiable spirit as Manning's, may not be left grinding in the prison-house of the Philistines; that they may one day retrace their steps, recall their dreadful renunciation; that their strength may return to them again, and they may be among the first to lay hold upon the pillars that sustain the gigantic system of Rome; and, unlike Samson, spared amidst the tremendous crash, they

may yet live to join with God's angels and God's saints, shouting over the ruins, "Hallelujah ! Babylon the Great is fallen ; rejoice, ye angels, and glorify the Lord, all ye his saints."

Let us highly value the Spirit dwelling in our hearts as the greatest boon to man's deepest personal wants. Ever listen to the monitions of that Holy Spirit. Do not think that, when the Spirit speaks to man, it is in some awful, impressive, or irresistible manner. Sinai does not always thunder ; Calvary does not always quake ; Pentecost does not always burn. The still, small voice, speaking in the cells and depths of the human heart, may be that blessed Spirit reasoning of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment. Oh, cherish the voice ! "Holy Spirit, abide with me continually. Thou Teacher and Comforter, remain in my heart, a light that shall never fail, a genial flame that shall not be quenched, a joy that shall not die." Cultivate those affections amid which the Holy Spirit dwells. Lay aside wrath, malice, evil speaking ; the Holy Spirit of God will not dwell there, such home gives no hospitality to him. Oh, pray that the house may be swept and garnished, and made a fit dwelling-place for Him "in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore !" Always appeal to the great directory of life, God's Holy Word. Let not the shadow of a priest, or the interpretation of a rationalist, ever come between you and this blessed book. All other books are echoes ; this is the original, the Heaven-inspired, the perfect standard.

AN APPENDIX.

CHAPTER XVII.

MICAH. TAKES DEVOTED MONEY. RESTORES IT. INTENDED FOR AN IDOL. IMAGES AND PICTURES. AMERICAN MISSIONARIES IN THE EAST. MAHOMETAN HATRED OF IMAGES. THE ARMENIANS.

WE have closed that most remarkable, in some respects difficult, but in no respect uninteresting biography of Samson, a judge of Israel, remarkable for great physical strength, and for its employment in the service of his people. Chapter xvii. seems altogether dislocated from the previous statements contained in this book. Indeed it is very obvious that this chapter, and the three that follow, are not the historic succession of the previous chapters of the book, but a kind of episode that ought to have been inserted, according to chronological arrangement, after the first chapter, but which has been brought in here as a sort of appendix to the whole history of Judges, explanatory of some details, the insertion of which in their proper place would have interrupted the train and continuity of the narrative that we have been reading. Viewing it, therefore, in this light, as an episode, or as an appendix to the book, we proceed to note what is therein stated. "There was a man of

mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me ; I took it." It appears that the mother had set apart this money for what she thought a religious, what we know to have been a superstitious, use ; and, like most ignorant persons doing so, she pronounced in her own heart, or audibly in the hearing of her son, a curse upon any one who should dare to lay a hand upon it. It is to this curse pronounced upon the thief, whoever he should be, that the son alludes ; and the son, having himself been guilty of the unfilial and dishonest crime of appropriating that money, is brought however to repentance ; or if not to repentance, is at least alarmed lest the curse imprecated by a mother, should descend upon his head ; and he therefore comes back and says, " Here is the money that I stole ; I wish to restore it." And his mother said, not all she ought to have said, though so far true, " Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son."

She did not recognise in his conduct a great sin, which she ought to have explained, and for which she ought to have pointed out the source and fountain of forgiveness, because perhaps too unenlightened ; she simply reversed the curse which she had pronounced, and said, " Instead of wishing my curse to light on you, because you have returned me the money I will now pronounce a blessing, or the reverse of the curse ; and, therefore, blessed be thou of the Lord, my son."

He restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, and his mother then tells him their history. " I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the

Lord from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image." Let us observe here what superstition or apostasy is. You see that she had dedicated the money to the living and the true God, Jehovah; but she thought that she ought to have, what the very law of that God interdicted, an image or an idol to represent him; and this image was to be made out of the silver of the eleven hundred shekels which she had set apart for this purpose. Now this one fact shows the terrible degeneracy that had invaded the land of Israel; it was the commencement of apostasy; for of all prohibitions the most frequently renewed, and the most solemnly insisted on in God's holy word, is that of representing him by anything whatever. Idolatry, throughout the whole of the New Testament, does not mean only the gross and palpable thing of worshipping Jupiter, Juno, Mars, or any other alien and strange god;—idolatry in the Old Testament, and it is a fact very much lost sight of, means worshipping the true God through any image that he has forbidden, even if meant to represent him. And hence, when you hear persons say that they pray before an image of our Saviour, or before an image, as I have seen, of God the Father; if you venture to say to such persons, That is idolatry, they say, "No such thing; I worship the God it represents; I worship the Saviour of whom it is the picture." I admit you do so; but if you take this book as your rule of faith, it states in the most explicit manner that idolatry is not simply the worship of a gross thing of the Pantheon, but that it is making any image or likeness of Him who is in heaven, and worshipping him through it, or by it, in any one shape or in any one way. We

must never, therefore, lose sight of this most precious truth, God is a Spirit ; and they that worship him are to worship him, not by images, not by pictures, but in spirit and in truth.

I attended, a few days ago, a most interesting meeting at the house of a nobleman, well known for his zeal and sympathy with everything that is good and great, where the President of the College of American Missionaries at Constantinople was making some statements respecting the progress of the Gospel in Turkey. He mentioned, among other things, that the Mahometans (who have seen Christianity only in the Greek church, where there are no images, but pictures—a very unimportant distinction) shrink from Christianity as idolatry. I remember one day making a remark to a Bishop of the Greek Church, “Have you any images in your church?” “No, no!” he was shocked at the very idea ; he said, “The thing is horrible ;” but he added, in most suggestive innocence, “we have only pictures, not images and idols ;” as if there could be any real distinction. This President of the American Mission in Constantinople, stated the interesting fact, that the Mussulmans, having seen Christianity only in the shape of the Western Apostasy, or of the Eastern and the Greek Apostasy, came into some of the American churches, which are in their forms of worship exactly the same as the Scotch church ; and they said when they saw them, “You are not Christians ; you are Protestants, you cannot be Christians. You have no images, you have no pictures ; you are surely approaching to Mussulmans ; you are going to join us.” And it is most remarkable, the clergyman

added, that in the mosques of Mahomet there is not anything like a picture, or an idol, or an image of any sort; reminding us of what I tried to teach in explaining the Apocalypse, that the Mahometanism of the 7th century was God's great scourge of the idolatry of professing Christendom. And I must say, from what I have heard stated by this learned and experienced divine, that the Mussulman worship seems nearer Christianity than the worship of the Greek Church. At all events there is nothing approaching to an idol or an image. Well, the question was asked by one interested in it, What is to be the character of the church that is to be erected by the Church of England in Constantinople? And I was most delighted when I heard, as an authorized statement, that there is to be not even an atom of coloured or decorative work; there is not to be the shadow of an image or human figure of any sort or shape; it is to be most severely plain, without decoration or ornament; so that the Mussulmans may see a church without what they abhor,—the least symptom of idolatry or idolatrous worship.

I was extremely struck with this interesting fact, which he also stated, that the Armenian Church, a very large and powerful body of Christians, is rapidly accepting Protestant Christianity; and that at this moment they sold, he said, among the Turks in Europe, about 100 Bibles in the Turkish language per month; when for years before there was scarcely sold a single copy. And so complete is the change that is taking place, that I hope, with great prudence, for that is much wanted, and with great zeal, the Gospel will be introduced; and I believe that the

results will be most important. He mentioned another remarkable fact. He said, it will not do to send an English Missionary to the Turks; his very entering the house of a Pasha, or any other dignitary, would instantly create probably a tumult in the streets. But the very remarkable fact is, that the Armenians do all the commerce of the Turks, that they have constant access to their houses; they may go out and come in unsuspected; and these Armenian Christians are some of them prepared to undergo martyrdom, as some of them have undergone it, rather than renounce the simple Protestant faith they have been taught by these excellent American Missionaries.

All these things are most encouraging; and the reason why I have ventured to allude to them here is, the impression made upon the Mussulmans by seeing Christianity without an image and without a picture, and the favourable reception they have given to that pure and scriptural form of Evangelical Christianity.

FALSE HOPES.

CHAPTER XVII.

“Then said Micah, Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.”—JUDGES xvii. 13.

WE have seen a little of the history of the personage here set forth by Micah as his great guarantee that all should be well with him below, and better with him above, seeing he had a Levite for his priest. This personage, in whom he trusted, seems to have been a wandering priest, a Levite detached from his duties, or still more probably dismissed from the temple service because of his misconduct, indiscretion, or heresy. He seems to have been one of those delineated by Jude, where he speaks of “clouds without water, wandering stars, trees plucked twice up by the roots, whose fruit is quite withered.” But the worse the man, the more manageable he was likely to be for a consideration ; and as Micah wanted a priest of that stamp, and had probably, through the appropriate channels of the day, advertised for one,—Micah wishing to have, not instruction for his mind, but confirmation in his happy ignorance of, and insensibility to troublesome duties ; not disturbance for his conscience that might end in happiness, but peace—not by deliverance from sin—but peace in the practice of sin,

—therefore the sort of priest that he wanted, was the most agreeable, pliable, and squeezable of his order; and hearing that this Levite was without a situation, and aware himself that he had plenty of money to hire him, and judging him from report to be just the sort of man he wanted, he required an interview to discuss the terms of the bargain. At that interview, as far as we can trace it here, there is no inquiry about testimonials; no inquiry why this wandering priest left his last situation, and was a candidate for a new one. There is no anxiety expressed about his orthodoxy, or as to the truth or falsehood of his statements. It was enough for Micah that he was a priest; and the worse he was the more likely he would be to speak smooth things to one on whose purse he depended for his maintenance and amount of pay. Micah wanted not a preacher of the truth, but a priest. The difference is palpable. In the New Testament ministers are called ambassadors from God; in the Old Testament the ministers of the temple were called priests to God. If a man be an ambassador, he cannot be a priest; and if he be a priest, he cannot be an ambassador. What is an ambassador? One that comes from God the King with a message to mankind. What is a priest? One that goes from man to deal with God, offering sacrifices on behalf of mankind. If, therefore, the modern ministers of the New Testament be ambassadors bringing a message from God to man, they cannot be sacrificing priests; and if they be sacrificing priests, dealing with God on behalf of man, then they cannot be ambassadors. It remains to take the one or the other; but a priest and an ambassador both one cannot necessarily be. Just in the

same manner the distinction in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is very suggestive. If the Lord's Supper be a sacrament, it cannot be a sacrifice; if it be a sacrifice, it cannot be a sacrament. Why? A sacrament is something that God gives to man; a sacrifice is something that man offers to God. It cannot be both. So, in the same manner, if you be a priest to offer a sacrifice to God, you cannot be an ambassador to bring down glad tidings from God. And what Micah wanted was not an ambassador, who might be very troublesome by telling him freely of his mind; but a priest, constantly to minister to and for him. The reason is abundantly obvious. Micah wanted ease to his conscience, peace in the practice of sin; a spring of indulgences on which he could always draw, a source of absolution to which he could always appeal when the recollection of sin was very troublesome.

To flesh and blood, that is, to unsanctified human nature, nothing can be more palatable than to be allowed to sin to-day, with a dead certainty that to-morrow, for a small consideration, you can have a cleansing absolution. Nothing can be more delightful to human nature than to know that should there be any sins not fully washed away by absolution, penance can be done for them, or indulgence can be extended to them. In short, Micah wanted a man of business to transact his eternal interests; and to take care that in virtue of his retaining fee, his client should suffer no inconvenience here or hereafter. Such was the man and such also the priest. The wages or the stipend is agreed on, the service settled; and the hireling Levite is duly installed by him that hired him to do the specific work for which he would be well paid, so long

as he should do it to the taste, the convenience, and the quiet of the conscience, of the patron and employer who had hired him.

What is the reason why Micah, or rather why human nature, wishes for a priest, or must have something to lean on, and trust to, in order to feel peace in the prospect of eternity and a judgment seat? Some one has said, "Man is a religious animal." In the right sense that expression is correct; that is to say, man cannot get on without a religion of some sort. Whatever be the cause of it, it is fact. It may be that he has still sensibilities in his conscience, that, touched by sin, constantly whisper to him of death, judgment, God. It may be that there survives in his memory some of the unquenched glory that he carried forth with him from Paradise, and which he cannot extinguish in his greatest aberration from God. But whether it be that man recollects what he was, and how terribly he has fallen, or feels in his conscience what he is, and what terrible retribution he deserves, his conscience will look backward to a departed excellence it cannot forget, and upward to a holy God it cannot bribe, and forward to a judgment-seat it cannot avoid. It may be muffled, it may be lulled, it may be stupified for a little; but it is only to recover its ancient strength, and in its most withering and impressive spasms so to reason of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment, that a monarch shall quake upon his throne, and a judge tremble upon his judgment-seat. "Conscience," some one says, "makes cowards of us all;" and conscience too makes heroes of us all. It is the most awful power in the universe; and the most extraordinary feature in human nature is that it ever

succeeds, as often as it tries, in bribing the judgment or utterly quenching the accusations of conscience. What explains much of the love of excitement in this world? It is man running from himself. What would be a most wholesome discipline? Just a quarter of an hour's communion with oneself every day. The *terra incognita* exists in each man's bosom; and if we knew ourselves better, we should think of God, of Christ, of salvation more. The conscience, aroused, startled, uneasy, wants a religion. It cannot do without a religion. Unhappily it does not wait for, or at first accept, the best; it seizes the readiest, the nearest, and the most palatable; like a man in violent pain, he will not take the slow prescription of the physician, he will lay hold of the loud pretension of the empiric, anxious to get rid of a present pain, whatever be the ultimate mischief he thereby creates. So when man is awakened by his conscience, is afraid, startled, and alarmed, he will have recourse to that religion which will give the speediest absolution, administer the most quieting opiate, and say in the most persuasive strains, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace; that will whisper, "You need not mortify the lusts of the flesh, only mortify the flesh; you need not repent with the heart, only do penance with the body; you need not deal with a God who gives a pardon that in its bosom carries purification, but with a sympathising priest, a Levite for thy priest, who will give the licence to sin, and yet an opiate that you shall not be troubled by the recollection of it; a peace not by the crucifixion of your sin, but peace in the indulgence of your sin." Micah will shout with all his heart, "This is the priest for me; and no stipend can be too great to secure such a man."

The grounds on which we all, till enlightened, and sanctified, and changed by the Spirit of God, on which and for which we all prefer this, are such as these. First, nothing so delights unsanctified human nature as its getting rid of a sense of responsibility. We all know what that is: whatever be our office, whatever our situation, or position, a painful thing is the sense of responsibility. We feel responsibility is dutiful; but we cannot deny it is at times painful. Well, of all things now that man likes to get rid of one is his responsibility to God for what he is. And hence there is a great deal very plausible, though most deceptive in the illustration we occasionally hear—if I have got anything to do with law I put myself in the hands of a respectable lawyer; if I am ill, I put myself in the hands of my physician. “And,” argues human nature, willing to be convinced, “when I am troubled by my conscience, I put myself in the hands of a Levite for my priest.” This is most agreeable; and the result is that instead of feeling that most troublesome, but most dutiful and most precious thing, individual responsibility, you say whenever you are troubled, “That is my priest’s business;” and he, well paid, as the Levite was, is quite willing to take all the charge, whatever be the amount, upon his own most convenient, and for this purpose consecrated, shoulders. What is the peculiarity of priestism or the Levite for a priest? Its peculiarity is this: that religion is an outside and vicarious business; that you have nothing to do but enjoy yourself, and leave the priest to act professionally at the judgment-seat of God. But what was the grand feature of the Reformation of the sixteenth century? Just this; it rolled away respon-

sibility from the steps of the church, and laid it at the threshold of each man's individual conscience; if there be one great fact, that more signally evolved from the Reformation than another, it was just this, that salvation is not a priest thing, nor an ecclesiastical thing, nor a corporate thing, nor a church thing; but the individual receiving Christ personally into his heart as all his salvation and all his desire. If we could be rid of responsibility, it would so far be very agreeable to unsanctified human nature. But we cannot; I can no more rid my soul of my responsibility than I can disrobe it of its immortality. As sure as I must live ever, so sure—what a thought!—I must stand alone at the judgment amid the mighty group; as much alone as if there were none there but my individual self; and amid a silence so intense that I shall hear the beating of my own heart, and amid a light so searching that my innermost thoughts shall be as transparent as the stars in the sky, or the mountain peaks in the bright sunshine; I must stand at that judgment-seat, and individually answer for a rejected, or a neglected, or an accepted salvation. The first ground, therefore, on which the Micahs of human nature want to have a priest and a Levite is, that they want to get rid of individual responsibility. However, this is not the only ground. You will find there are grounds not identical, but substantially the same as this still pleaded by human nature, why it should be happy, not through the extirpation of sin, but in the practice and indulgence of sin. For instance, what is it but Micah's words translated into modern phrase:—"I belong to the true church; therefore, the Lord will do me good?"

Is it not the fact that some do so? I have heard it said, "I know that the Lord will do me good; for I belong to the true church." Now suppose that this be fact; suppose you belong to the only true visible church upon earth, there is an ulterior question you must answer. The visible church is composed, we are told, of tares for the burning, and wheat for everlasting garner. Well, if you belong to the true church, do you belong to the section of it that is all tares, or the section that is all wheat? And, therefore, your plea that you belong to the true church is no evidence that the Lord will do you good, unless you can show that you belong to that section of it which is wheat alone, and not tares. And then need I whisper to those that entertain such a plea, should any here be so superstitious, that many will appear at the judgment-seat who will say, "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and in thy name done many wonderful works. And I will profess unto them, Depart from me, ye that work iniquity; I know you not."

Another maxim substantially the same as that of Micah, and substantially the same ground of hope, is, "Our minister has the true succession: therefore we are quite sure that he will do all that we need, and instruct us in the way that is right." And when this notion exists in all its perfection, and in its full development, it is substantially, "What such a minister says is truth; what such a minister does is merit; and if I sit under his ministry I am sure that the Lord will do me good." Now, suppose, that what is called the apostolical succession were fact—and I cannot merely guess nor assert, but prove it is the most apocryphal and transparent of all fables;—sup-

pose the apostolical succession be fact, and that any one minister upon earth can trace his genealogical, or ecclesiastical pedigree up to Peter or to Paul—and I think the Archbishop of Dublin has offered a handsome reward to any one who will do so—suppose it to be fact, you must be aware that Hildebrand can just claim that succession as truly as the Bishop of Exeter ; and that Gregory the Ninth can prove that he belongs to that succession as truly as your minister. And if that be fact, to be in that connexion is not necessarily to be safe ; and to be a minister, a link in that chain, is not necessarily to be one whose life will be holy, or whose lips will be eloquent with saving truth. Besides, when one analyses such a pretension, what does it amount to ? That the whole charm lies not in truth, but in a person ; not in doctrine, but in office ; not in clean hands and a pure heart, but in the true genealogy ; not in moral worth, but in professional character. A more irrational, unchristian, and unscriptural notion cannot possibly be broached. I contrast what Paul says, with what one of his most boasted successors, Ignatius, said, “Look to the Bishop—do nothing without the Bishop.”

I may mention, however, that even these may not be the words of Ignatius, because they are on good grounds supposed to have been interpolated ; but suppose they are genuine, after you have heard these words, turn to what Paul says, “Who is Paul, who is Apollos, who is Cephas, but servants through whom ye believe ?” What a contrast ! If the one be apostolic, the other must be apostatic ; and if such be the development of the succession, we are better separate and remote from it altogether.

Another plea almost similar to that of Micah, is, "I regularly take the sacrament; I am regularly baptized; I always attend church; my children are baptized in the church; my forefathers were decently buried according to its rites. Well, since I have got all that, surely then the Lord will do me good." My answer to that is, Simon Magus was 'most apostolically baptized, but he was no better for it. Judas, there is every reason to believe, took the Lord's Supper, yet he went "to his own place." And what is most remarkable, the thief upon the cross was neither baptized, nor a partaker of the Lord's Supper; and yet, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." What does this prove to us? It proves, irresistibly, that whatever be the value or the duty of these things, you cannot build upon them as if they were charms, or plead any one of them as a *viaticum* in a dying hour; or hope that the Lord will do you good in time, and good in eternity, because you are a regular communicant, a devoted churchman, or a determined dissenter. All these belong, in short, to one category; they belong to that system which puts the altar in the room of its Lord; which puts the crucifix in the room of Christ crucified; which bows the soul in terror instead of winning it by love; which makes salvation a mechanical thing, a thing of manipulation, not a thing for the individual heart and soul. It is "the Levite for a priest;" and therefore, the hope against hope, "the Lord will do me good."

But these are not all the maxims of a similar kind. You will hear maxims not corrupt, but misapplied and perverted in the minds of many still. For instance, you will hear one say, "Well, I am not what

I should be—that I know right well—but then God is merciful.” It is most true, God is merciful—there is mercy in God ; but then, mark you, the same book that tells you God is merciful, specifies the only channel through which that mercy can be bestowed ; the same book that tells you that God is merciful, states, also, the door at which you must knock in order to obtain that mercy. If, therefore, you are pleading, God is merciful, when you have never prayed in the name of Jesus, and through his mediation, for the descent of that mercy on your soul, it is quite plain that while the maxim in itself is true, it is in its reference to you substantially the same as that of Micah, “ The Lord will do me good, because I have a Levite to my priest.”

Another will tell you, “ Well, in looking forward to a judgment-seat, I feel that I am at least as good as others ; I am no worse than other men ; I am an average specimen of Christian character in this imperfect world of ours.” But then to be able to say you are as good as others, evidently means that whatever be the level of the moral condition of the society with which you mingle, must be your standard ; and therefore, the maxim translated into modern phrase would be, “ At Rome, I do as Rome does ; in Paris, as Paris does ; in London, as London does. I take the average standard round me, as the standard by which I test and try my conduct.” But is this common sense ? Will it bear inspection ? Is it not already condemned in the strongest terms by an apostle when he says, “ For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves ; but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves,

are not wise." Our standard of perfection is God's holy word ; our perfect model and example is Christ alone, and to be able to say, "I am as good as others," may be substantially, "I am, practically, without Christ, and without a new heart, and without a holy character in the midst of the world."

Another maxim we sometimes hear is, "Well, I may have a great many defects about me, that I do not deny ; a great many things I have done that I wish had not been done ; but I have a good heart, and I mean well, and I do not want to do what is really wrong in the sight of God or in the sight of man." This may be perfectly true. I think it is monstrous to hear some preach that every human heart, without exception, is just one sink of wickedness, depravity, and crime. We cannot admit that. We feel that every heart needs to be made new, or regenerated, before it can enter the kingdom of heaven. But we must admit, that as in the outer world there are many flowers that blossomed in Paradise, retaining still something of their Eden loveliness, as there are in this world of ours many traces of a holier and happier state ; so there is in the human heart many a beautiful trait, many an amiable characteristic, that made the Son of God love the young man, though he was not born again, and could not yet enter into the kingdom of heaven. But what we say is, that however amiable you may be—however affectionate as parents — however dutiful as children — however loyal as subjects, all these may be, yet all these things together may exist, and Christianity not be. And therefore we allege that when you plead, "I have a good heart, and have many amiable characteristics,"

you state what may be in one aspect and in some degree true, but assuming the truth of, "Except a man be," not on the whole reformed, but, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," it is valueless.

Another maxim sometimes quoted as a reason why the Lord will do us good is, that we are very sincere, but we are not perfect. And you will hear the maxim frequently, "Such a one, it is true, is in error; true, his conduct is not what it should be—but he is very sincere." I admit at once, sincerity is a very beautiful trait; a Christian who is not sincere is as great an absurdity, as a thief who is honest, as a drunkard who is sober. An insincere Christian is a contradiction in terms. But what we allege is, that amiable and beautiful as sincerity may be, it is not enough. The apostle Paul was not one whit more sincere when he preached Christ in the synagogues, than when he persecuted the Christians, and made havoc of them in every city; he was just as sincere a persecutor, as he was an apostle. Sincerity is opposed to hypocrisy, and no more. Now a man may believe sincerely monstrous lies; he may do sincerely monstrous crimes—and all it implies is, that he is not a hypocrite. If I find a man sincere as a Mohammedan, I will respect him, and treat him with kindness and with courtesy; but my conviction will not, in the least, be altered that Mohammed is an impostor. So in the same manner, if a person be sincere, it merely goes to prove that all he thinks, and all he says, and all he does, are not hypocrisy, but sincerely and honestly done; but because they are not hypocrisy they are not, therefore, truth, and righteousness, and justice.

Another maxim sometimes heard is, "Well, I can say at the close of life," as some aged individual will remark, "that whatever I have done, I have done injury to no man. I have paid every man twenty shillings in the pound; I have passed through life without deserving, at least, if I have incurred, the censure of many; and having done injury to no one, I do think that I may say, I know now that the Lord will do me good." But is Christianity compatible with a negative character? What does it say? Does it say the grace of God teacheth us to do injury to no man? It certainly does teach that; but does it stop there? It teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. The tree that is without fruit is equally doomed with the tree that brings forth bad fruit. The fruits of the Spirit are positive: righteousness, peace, temperance, joy; and if you have not these fruits, you give evidence that you have not the grace of God in your heart. But, perhaps, some one may say, "More than all this, I have built asylums for the destitute, hospitals for the sick, schools for the ignorant; and have given my goods largely and liberally to the poor." This is right; and would to God we were not constrained to say that many a humane man excels in liberality many that profess higher, holier, and heavenly principles. But what we say is, you may do all this, and yet you may not have the grace of God. For what does an apostle say? "Though I bestow all my goods," mind you, not superfluities, not a tithe; but "though I bestow *all* my goods to feed the poor; and though I give my body to be burned, as a martyr; and have not something deeper, inner, more lasting than all,

love to God, it profiteth me nothing." It is, therefore, quite possible to be liberal and charitable in the popular sense of that word; and yet not to be a Christian. Now do not misunderstand me; when I say such maxims as "God is merciful;" "I am sincere;" "I have done harm to nobody;" "I am as good as others;" are not grounds of acceptance, and no reasons why you should argue, "It shall be well with me;" as if I meant to depreciate these things—God forbid. In their place they are excellent. Because I do not say the fruit is the tree, I do not depreciate the fruit. What I say is, these things, as far as they are pure, will be the offspring of a heart that is renewed; but in themselves they never can be viewed as the grounds of our acceptance in the sight of God.

But it is not enough to point out all these errors; let me try to point out also the ground on which you can say truly what Micah said superstitiously and falsely, "I know the Lord will do me good." That ground first of all is this, that you have individually and personally felt that there is no way to heaven but one; that there is no foundation on which you can base your hopes and prospects of eternal joy but one; that there is nothing you can do which will deserve it, that there is nothing you can suffer that will atone for the past; that there is no availing name in the most sainted calendar, and no act in the life of the greatest philanthropist that you can lay the stress of your soul upon in the prospect of a judgment day; that there is none other name given among men but the name of Christ. Now, what does this believing in Christ mean? It means

this, in plain, intelligible terms; I am a lost, ruined, miserable sinner; God's law condemns me; God's holiness repels me; and it does so most justly and most righteously; but I have no more power to lift myself to heaven than I have to lift myself to the nearest or the remotest fixed star. Man can no more save himself than he can create himself. And thus lost, ruined, miserable, as weak as I am worthless, I am told that One came from a height of glory to which imagination never soared, and came down to a depth of agony and woe, which no language of man can depict; and I am told, on the authority of the living God that he took upon him my curse, and exhausted it; that he took upon him my place, and obeyed my law, and fulfilled all righteousness for me; and that if I will consent to this, under a deep conviction that nothing else can save me, I am pardoned, and absolved, and justified in the sight of God. Here is salvation. It is not a thing of metaphysics; it is not a thing of mystery; it is the simplest thing. I do believe it is the very simplicity of the gospel that makes it a stumbling-block to so many. They are just like him of old, "If he had told me to do some great thing, then I would have done it; but to bid me go and wash, and be clean! Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" But take any symbol in the Old Testament, and you will see the reasonableness of it. Take for instance the brass serpent: What was it? The Israelite was dying; he was told by Moses, as commissioned by God, "If you, a dying Israelite, will look at that brass serpent, you will instantly get health to your body." Now, suppose the Israelite

had said, "I can understand taking a medicine, or taking a little draught, or some pill or some mixture prescribed for me; but the idea of getting health by looking at a piece of brass hoisted on a pole—the thing is so absurd that I will not look at it." But the Israelite that did look was happy and healthy; and that was an encouragement to those that were dying to look at it also. Now what does our Saviour say? "As Moses lifted up the brass serpent in the wilderness, so also must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him"—which is equivalent to looking at the brass serpent—"may not perish, but have eternal life." Here, then, is the gospel; here is the ground on which you can say, "The Lord will do me good;" that you, convinced of your ruin, (and I wonder any one in his senses can be convinced of anything else;—that you, convinced that you cannot save yourselves, and your own experience will tell you this, should fly, not with wings, but with the affections; run, not with the feet, but with the thoughts, the desires, the aspirations of the soul, and say to that exalted Saviour, who hears the heart's faintest murmur just as distinctly as he hears the song of the cherubim, in secrecy and in silence, but from the very heart, "Blessed Lord, I am ruined, I know that I am; I cannot help myself, but thou hast come not to help me but to save me; not to eke out my own efforts, but to supersede them; and I look to thee, and thy righteousness, O thou spotless Lamb, let it be mine; and my tainted fleece, the stray sheep coming back to the fold, blessed Lord, do thou take: and in all time of my tribulation, in all time of my wealth, in the hour of death,

and in the day of judgment my plea will be this—thou hast suffered, I am happy; thou hast obeyed, and I am righteous; and I plead as the very pass-word of the universe thy name, as the all-availing name.” That is Christianity; that is Salvation; there is no doubt it is, if there be truth in the Bible, if there be the capacity of showing it, that is the very essence of salvation. But, you say, why, if this is the case, then, will not men live as they like? I answer, there follows instantly on this acceptance, the Holy Spirit to dwell in your heart. He is exalted to give that Spirit, and as sure as you are in earnest about what I have told you, as sure as you do it from the very heart, in simplicity, sincerity, and in truth, so sure he will give you that Holy Spirit, who will change your heart, who will illuminate your understanding, who will make you love what you once hated, and hate what you once loved; and see light where all was darkness, and taste joy where all was bitterness; till at last you are constrained to say, not only, “The Lord will do me good,” but, “The Lord has done me good; and I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able as he is willing to keep what I have committed to him against that day.”

Having told you what is the ground of acceptance, I add, the man who has read these simple words—not my words, but the very echoes of the word of God—and yet perishes without a Saviour, deserves to perish. Nay, an apostle is constrained to say after all this, “If a man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be an anathema.” And the great condemning sin, if it should be the sin of any who read these words, which, God forbid, will not be the weight and pressure of a broken law, heavy as it is, but it will be the awful

shadow of a despised and rejected Cross, on which one died for us, and that we trod under foot the blood of the covenant, and counted it an unholy thing. I ask, then, do you believe in Christ the Saviour? I do not ask you, have you subscribed to creeds? I do not ask you, do you believe certain dogmas? What is wanted in the present day is not only orthodoxy, but life; not so much theology, as religion; not a Levite in any of his forms for our priest, but God Almighty our salvation, our righteousness, our all and in all.

STOLEN GODS.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CHILDREN OF DAN. THE FIVE MESSENGERS. THE DETECTED LEVITE. THE LEVITE'S STIPEND. HIS PROPHECY. A MINIA-TURE REPUBLIC. THE LEVITE'S GODS SEIZED. STOLEN GODS WORSHIPPED BY THE THIEVES. MOSES AND MANASSEH.

FIRST of all it is important to observe, by way of explanation of the disorderly and tumultuous incidents and scenes recorded in this, the preceding, and the succeeding chapters, that in these days there was no king in Israel; no law, authority, or ruler competent to rebuke, and to repress the licentiousness, of a people let loose from the restraints of law. We read that the children of Dan, one of the tribes of Israel, that ought to have held possession of its own part of the land, as it had been assigned at the partitionment of the whole, but had neglected to do this, or to extrude from it the Canaanites and others, who were the unlawful and unjust occupants, resolved at last to look after this little estate. They might have had it with ease at the beginning, but now it was only to be recovered at great risk, and by great sacrifice of money, and probably of men. Accordingly, they sent five men from their coasts, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; they

came in the course of their journey to Ephraim, to the house of Micah, of whom we have read in the previous chapter, that he had hired a priest to dwell in his house, thus congratulating himself, "Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest;" "And when they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite." This young man was an Ephraimite; and you recollect in a previous chapter of this very book, it is stated that it was a mark of those speaking the Ephraimite dialect, that they could not sound the word Shibboleth. Instead they always pronounced it Sibboleth; the letter *shin* or *sin* having two distinct pronunciations, according as the point is placed. Well, then, when they came to the house of Micah, they recognised the provincialism of the reverend Ephraimite; they knew it was his voice, by the peculiarity of his accent, "And they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place?" as much as to say, "We know that you are a Levite, and looking very sharp after your stipend; how much do you get from your employer? what is your standing, and what is the worth of your situation here?" And he said unto them, "Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me." He does not say that he dealt liberally, or that he dealt illiberally; simply that he had dealt with him, and that he had hired him. And very candidly he added, "And being thus hired, I am the priest that officiate in an idol temple, Levite as I am, before him."

These people, evidently infected with the idolatrous principles of the land of Dan, having lost in the con-

fusion of revolutionary times all recollection of their religion, and the beautiful and holy purity of its worship, said unto him, "Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous." The priest, who was always very willing, provided there was an ample consideration, as his character indicates, as no doubt there was here, said, "Go in peace;" but instead of giving a prediction, the failure of which might discredit his character, he imitates the heathen oracles, and gives an equivocal prophecy. He says, "Before the Lord is your way wherein ye go." They understood that to mean that "God will bless and preserve you;" but it is so worded, you observe, that simply and severely construed means, "God sees what you are doing; you cannot go beyond his cognisance, or extend your journey beyond the reach of his eye; the Lord is before you, go in peace." They put the best construction, that is, the one they liked, upon it, and set out. "And they came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in anything; and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man." Bush, a very able and acute commentator, makes the note upon this text that here plainly was a small prosperous republic; and he is very anxious to show, as might be expected from an American, just as the opposite might be expected from us who are monarchists, that there being no magistrate in the land, but a republic, self-contained and self-governed, they were not put to shame, they had no business

with any man, and they were a people dwelling quiet and secure, after the manner of the Zidonians. But I do not think that this inference is a just one; because the constant repetition of the expression, "There was no king in Israel," and the very sentence that follows, "one did what he liked," must be the governing idea; and in the light of that idea I think we must construe the statement, "There was no magistrate in the land," that they would not have one, not that they preferred a republic, but that they preferred licentiousness and latitudinarianism; and therefore repudiated those laws that are the bulwarks of good men, and are restraints upon the passions of bad men.

"And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What say ye?" Some conversational explanation took place, and then the five men said, "Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim," these were idols, "and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do." It was as much as to say, We must have a religion wherever we have a country; we must have some form of worship; as we have lost or renounced the worship of the living and the true God, we must pitch upon the best substitute that we can. And therefore they arranged the 600 Danites before the gates, to terrify and awe Micah; and the five men that set out originally as spies, went into Micah's house, they asked no questions, offered no remuneration, made no promise, but laid their hands upon the man's gods, and took them, and pointed, of course, to the 600 men with weapons of war as the best answer to any remon-

strances in reference to their conduct in this matter. The priest, naturally amazed at the liberty that these men had taken, and surprised that they should come in, and without even asking his leave, or making the faintest apology, should run away with all the gods that he had, his ephod, and teraphim, and molten image, said, "What made you do this? I do not like this, and I think you have no right to do it." But they showed that in their creed might was right, they said, "Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth. You may get the worst of it, your best way is just patiently to submit." The expression, "Lay thine hand upon thy mouth," is the symbol of silence. Hence, in the mythology of the ancients, the god of silence is represented, in statuary, with his fore-finger fixed upon his lips, therefore, "Lay thine hand upon thy mouth." And then they said to him, "Besides, if you look at your own advantage—and we know you are a priest that look very sharply in that direction—you will find that it will be more profitable to be a priest to many than to one; for one can only give you so much stipend, and a great many may give you much more. And therefore, you had better consider the advantages as well as the disadvantages of your situation." Well, the priest, being a mere mercenary hireling, hearkened gladly, "and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them," as it is in our translation, it being the old word for "luggage" or "baggage," or things carried, not the vehicle in which they were carried. "And when they were a good way from the house

of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan. And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What is all this about? What do you mean by it? What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?"

Now conceive the consummate coolness and impudence of such a remark, when they had taken away the poor man's religion, run away with his gods, plundered his most sacred temple of all its contents, and when he comes after them asking what they had done, and crying to them to restore his gods, they ask, with great coolness, "What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?" And he said, "Aileth me? Why, how can you ask such a question? You have taken away my gods, which I made myself, and therefore, my own gods." Now mark the irony that is latent in this, not that he meant it so, "My gods which I made, my own gods, and the priest, and ye are gone away, and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, what aileth thee?" And the children of Dan just treated him, where there was no magistrate, no ruler, no king, exactly as they had treated the poor priest. "Let not thy voice be heard amongst us—you had better hold your tongue in not saying these harsh things, for we are a very strong people, and some of these angry fellows may seize you, and you will lose your own life, and the lives of your household too, in addition to the loss of your gods." And Micah, evidently being a weak man, and having a great respect for self-preservation, turned and went back unto his house, without his gods.

They took the things which Micah had made; and actually set up the gods they had stolen, and bowed down before them and worshipped them. What a depth of degradation is there in the human heart, when it can worship stolen gods as if they were the living God!

“The children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan.” It is remarkable, that in the Book of Revelation, where the tribes of Israel are employed to represent the redeemed people of God, the tribe of Dan is omitted. It was the first to introduce idolatry into Israel, on a sort of national scale, and it suffered the shame, and the ignominy, and the brand of exclusion ever since. But here it is said, “Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan.” Now the son of Gershom was the son-in-law of Moses, and he is here called the son of Manasseh. In two or three of the earliest manuscripts of the Septuagint, that is, the Old Testament translated into Greek about 300 years before the Christian era; and in the Vulgate, that is, the Latin, translated from the Hebrew and the Greek, both by Jerome, in the fourth century, and subsequently amended by Sixtus and Clement, two Popes of the church of Rome, it is not written Manasseh, but Moses. In the original, the words are spelt nearly alike. It is said that the different spelling must have been interpolated by the Jews, who were ashamed to let it be known that a grandson of Moses should introduce idolatry.

MICAH MOURNING THE LOSS OF HIS GODS.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“And Micah said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee?”—JUDGES XVIII. 24.

WHAT a wondrous treasury of instructive lessons is the Bible! It states facts just as they occur; but never one that remains dead and unsuggestive. Each always becomes a lesson of instruction or of guidance to them that study it. In one place we read of shining precedents, whose footprints upon the sands of time are ever visible before us, that we may walk in them, and enjoy the promises: in another place, a beacon is set up to warn us against the sunken rocks or dangerous reefs on which some have made shipwreck, that we may avoid them: in another place the joys and the happiness of life, the peace and the bright hope enjoyed in death by some faithful one who has risen from the field of conflict, where he fought as a member of the church militant, and entered on the everlasting reward, joining the choirs in glory, is set before us, that we may be cheered, comforted, and encouraged. In another, and in the instance now read, are the regrets and the lamentations felt by a man, fallen from the pinnacle of greatness to the very

depths of ruin, after losing the gods he had made, the priest he had set up, and all the transient opiate composure that such a pantheon was fitted to inspire. Formerly Micah was in ecstasy—"I have got gods now, and a Levite to my priest, and I am sure, therefore, that I shall prosper; the Lord will do me good." Now we read of poor Micah betrayed by his priest, plundered of his gods, obliged to hush his remonstrances, lest worse should befall him, and sunk in the very depths of misery. "What aileth me? How can you ask such a question? You have taken away my gods, and my priest, and all that my heart trusted in." This incident is fitted to teach us some important lessons.

When Micah lost his gods and his priest, it was the loss of all that was his religion; right or wrong, it was his all. The lessons we educe from this are such as these: our religion is not the creed we subscribe to, but what most reigns and dominates in our hearts and thoughts, from early morn till dewy eve. This, substantially, in the sight of God, and for all its practical results, is our religion. What occupies our waking hours by day, and fills and colours our dreams by night, is our religion; within its folds are our gods, our heaven, our hope, our all; and the creed we subscribe, or the religion, strictly so called, which we profess, is often a mere side act that has very little connexion with the main current, and tone, and character of our life. No man, from Micah to the latest monk, lives without a religion of some sort. The definition, "Man is a religious animal," has some truth in it; not that he has, by nature, a sympathy with the true religion, but that no man in this world can live

without a religion; he can no more live without a religion than he can live without air, or escape hunger without his daily bread. What the religion may be is another question; but in sickness, in sorrow, or at seventy, man feels that he must have some rock higher than himself, some spring from which he can drink the waters of peace, some opiate to his conscience, which begins to speak in its most awful accents when the first beams of approaching eternity fall upon it. The loss of this religion, such as it is, is the greatest calamity, if no substitute be found. It is not the departure of a spangle from his robe, or of a part of its lace, but of all he wears: it is not the loss of a mere luxury, but of the last asylum in which he finds a retreat; it is the departure of the last hope on which he could buoy his soul in the prospect of a judgment-seat. And when you have taken from man the religion that he has—be it the deepest delusion in which the human soul was ever steeped—you have taken from him that which was the only spring of his peace, the only fountain of his hope; despondency, down to the depths of despair, must be the necessary and inevitable reaction. It is cruelty to take from a man the religion that he has, unless you can supersede it by something brighter and better. I do not think that any man is warranted to go on a crusade to convert the Hindoos from Hindooism, or the Mohammedans from Mohammedanism, or the Romanists from Romanism, or the Socinians from Socinianism, unless he is prepared to substitute for any or all of these departed superstitions, a living, sustaining, and saving Christianity. To preach against Popery will never make a man better, unless you bring to bear upon it the pressure and

magnificence of a brighter and a better creed. I would not, therefore, take away Micah's gods, unless I could show him the living and the true God; I would not deprive this poor superstitious man of his priest, unless I could lead him to the great High Priest. I would not like to spoil the Hindoo of his miserable creed, unless I had in my soul the deep and blessed conviction that I can teach him something better, and make him not only a wiser but a happier man also. Why should I cloud his only star, unless I can tell him of the big bright sun? Why should I quench his little twinkling taper upon earth, unless I can bring him unto Him who is the light that lightens the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel? It is cruelty, it is crime, to take from a man his "peace, peace," such as it is, unless we can substitute for it the peace that passeth understanding. We here see the world's comfort when it takes from a man such religion as he has: they reply to him, "We are strong, you had better put your finger upon your lips, you had better be quiet, for in our country at present, where there is no king nor magistrate, might is right, and therefore, you had better be quiet." Such is the world's comfort. But a religion that man can take, that thieves can steal, that time can waste, that violence can overturn, is not from God. The religion that man constructs, man can overturn: the religion that God inspires, has the eternity of God for its issue, and the protection of the Omnipotence of God for its ceaseless presence. Micah's gods were made by himself; Micah's priest was hired and paid by his money; and the pantheon in which the priest and the gods continually were, was the creation of

his own genius. However beautiful, fair, and precious they may have been, they were all the offspring of man. The stream can only rise to the source from which it originally came; a religion that is from man is liable to all the incidents and accidents of the history of man. The mightiest thing that man can establish has always been proved to be frail; the shortest sentence that God has inspired, has ever been, and ever will be, coeval with his own being.

True and living Christianity lodged in the heart, not a dogma in the creed, but a life, an experience and a power, is inextinguishable by any force or violence, and can never yield to the most seductive temptations to which it may be exposed. When the true Christian sees outward privileges depart, when he can no longer find a sanctuary opening its folded doors to receive him, when he can hear no minister preach the gospel, where he can partake of no sacraments, does his religion go with these? Micah's creed perished with his gods, his priest, his idols, and his teraphim; but a Christian's religion becomes intenser within when all the outward expressions and exponents of it have either perished or been taken away. The Christian finds then in his daily meals, his sacraments; in his own soul, a solemn sanctuary; on the mountain brow, on the ocean's bosom, in the bleak desert, everywhere and always his Father and his God. A false religion dies with its outward exponents, living religion becomes intenser when all these are withdrawn. The false religion is like the summer brook during a thunder shower, full and overflowing its banks; but soon after leaving a dry channel. A Christian's religion is like streams that are fed from Alpine glaciers, fullest

and freshest in the summer season, when all other streams besides are dried up. His religion is not dependent upon terrestrial or human things; the hour of your sorrow is the era of its triumph, when it vindicates its sufficiency, and teaches not to cry with the disappointed Micah of old, "Ye have taken away my gods, and I have nothing;" but, "I know in whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day;" and "Although the fig-tree should not blossom, and though there should be no fruit on the vine; though the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat, though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there should be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation."

Having made these remarks, rising, as they do, directly from the incident recorded in this chapter; and reminding you of what I have said in the commencement of my reflections, that every man must have a religion, that Atheism is a practical impossibility, and reminding you also of the definition, that what is uppermost at morn, deepest at night, and gives tone, colouring, shape, direction, to all you think, and plan, colour it as you like with the tints of Christianity, is the religion that you live under, and are likely to die in: let me ask you, What is your religion? What is it that occupies the deepest place in your hearts? What is it the dislodgment of which would be the terrible reaction of intolerable despair? Is it, let me ask you, wealth? Is Mammon your god, is he your priest, is accumulation your burning passion, is adding to your gains—a desire that within its limits is duty,

that overflowing its banks becomes a terrible and a heinous crime—is that your only aim and object? Let me ask you, is the love and accumulation of wealth, the consuming passion? Mammon is your god; your pursuit of it, disguise it as you like, is the worship of him; your money is, to you, your all: and when it takes wings and flees away, or when it is taken from you by the aggressor, as his gods were taken from Micah, you must feel pain—that is human: but if you are also precipitated into despair, and give up all for lost, because your wealth has put forth wings and left you, you give awful proof that you are worshipping, as God, a vile god that man has made; and blessed result, if the despair of a day teaches you the better lesson, to leave the broken cistern and seek out the fountain of living water. Or, I will put it in another shape, What are your gods? Are they your children? Many a mother makes her children not—she would repudiate the imputation—nominally her gods, but practically so. The sin in all these things, common sense will tell you, is not in the affection, but in the excess of it. It is a remarkable fact, great sins lie on the very edge of grand virtues. Man's greatest peril is not in falling into gross sin, but at that point where a gigantic sin crouches and waits for its prey under the splendour and attractions of a great virtue. For instance, it is proper to love money, but in its measure. Just in the same manner, it is proper to love a beautiful house, beautiful paintings, beautiful poetry, a beautiful lawn, a beautiful garden, fine horses and carriages, all these things it is human to love; the sin is not in having them, nor in liking them, but in making the love of them your religion, your chief glory

or your all. So in reference to your children ; it is a duty, nay, it is more than a duty, it is one of the deepest instincts of our nature, to love our young children. But when you expend the treasures upon them that belong to Him that gave them ; when you cease to provide for them, which is a duty, and begin to devote head, heart, life, exertion, and all you are and have, not to provide for them what is needful, but to dignify, to glorify, and to exalt them ; when that which in its own niche is a precious virtue, a holy instinct, a dignifying grace, comes to be placed where it should not be, in the holy chancel of the conscience within, and to take the supreme place in the heart, and to absorb the affections, and to engage the services that are due to God, your children become your idols, their nurse is your priest, their toys are your teraphim, and your nursery is your temple ; and all your cares, your thoughts, your worship, your anxieties, and pride, are concentrated on these carved living images. Is your great and absorbing thought any one form of a corrupt faith ? For instance, is it Micah's religion ; a religion of gods, of canonized saints, of altars, of priests, of sacrifices, of ecclesiastical ceremonies, of grand processions—is it a religion of this sort ? Such a religion is fugitive as it is false ; it will not bear analysis,—your creed will not bear the light, it will tremble for its safety when a conclusive argument is pronounced by the humblest ; it makes you think of outer things, and believe that your safety is in the precision and the perfection with which you observe them. Depend upon it such is not a religion that will either last long. At that hour when all that man prides himself in, all that priests glory in, shall depart like the baseless fabric of

a vision, it will be felt and found that the kingdom of God never was either meat or drink, fasting or feasting, ceremony or ritual, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Or is your religion, nominally the true religion, but have you taken up some sectarian apprehension of it? For instance, has your Christianity become merely a religion of the senses—the eye charmed with beautiful forms, the ear regaled with Gregorian tones,—the senses all delighted by a bountiful provision for their gratification; and do you, professing the true religion, feel practically this, that its outside ornaments are all that you care about or depend on? or, has it taken the shape of the religion of imagination, the religion of poetry and of romance; ever seeing nature in sunshine, never seeing its deep shadows, nature adored, beauty worshipped; the poetry of the Bible, its charm, not its living and spiritual religion? Or is yours the religion of sympathy and pity—which weeps at a solemn appeal—rejoices at a glorious prospect—ebbs and flows continually, but has no hold of the heart, no deep root in the soul, no power that can minister to the needy and the destitute; a religion of sympathy and romance, not the religion of light, and life, and power? Or, is it the religion of mere conscience—that religion which regards God as a tyrant, which tries to propitiate Him by sacrifice, which looks on religion as all gloom, which obeys the prescription of the Bible, as a patient takes a nauseous medicine from his physician; which, like Herod, does many things gladly, not that you love them, but that you dread the consequences of not doing them? Such a religion will not stand; all these are exhalations from below; these gods will be

taken from your pantheon, the priests that are the ministers of these will not stand by you in the hour of trial; you will discover, what Micah discovered, the bitterness of any substitute for One, in whose presence there is joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for ever and for ever.

Suppose I address one holding a false religion, whatever that false religion may be. It is our duty to undeceive you. But what are the weapons that we ought to employ in prosecuting that duty? I have said before, that we ought not to take from any man the religion that he has, unless we have something better to give him. Well, now, how are we to try and undeceive the Romanist, the Unitarian, the Mohammedan, the Hindoo, the Deist—all who are in any degree or shade of error and apostasy from God? We are not to employ fraud. No success in the result can ever be a compensation for the use of forbidden and unholy means; no splendour that may crown the exertion can ever be an atonement for the fraud or the falsehood that you employed in seeking to attain it. "Pious frauds," as they were called of old, "are simply impious blasphemies." Suffer, if needs be, in order to obtain what is right; be patient, as you always must be, in the prosecution of what is just; but never do a crooked thing to obtain the greatest end, or be guilty of the least fraud of expression, or of conduct, or of thought, even should it be crowned with, what seem to you, magnificent results.

As we are not to employ fraud in trying to undeceive those that are wrong, so we are never to employ force. All sensible men have banished the idea from their minds, that a heretic can be converted by the

faggot, or the sword, or imprisonment. It lingers amid the dens and cells of the Inquisition on the continent of Europe; but wherever the light is, there such atrocities have taken flight and disappeared. And surely nothing can be more monstrous than to suppose that a man's mind will ever be convinced by the punishment of his body. You may crush him into absolute submission, you may degrade him into a wretched hypocrite, you may turn him into a slave, but no material weapon, however skilfully wielded, however exquisitely polished, can ever touch the mind, or alter the deepest or the most superficial conviction there. If the sword is to be unsheathed in connexion with religion, let the foes, not the friends of Christianity do it. If the faggot is to be collected and the fire is to be kindled, in order to consume the heretic, let heretics do it, not those who are constrained to own, if they believe God's word, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty."

We are not to employ a bribe in order to make Micah give up his gods, his priest, and his delusion. Just as man's convictions cannot be forced, so man's convictions cannot be purchased. You may purchase silence, you may purchase submission, but all the treasury of a nation, and all the armies of an empire cannot root out one deep-seated conviction from the mind, or plant in it a single conviction that reason and conscience repudiate. We are not to try to end a wrong religion by derision, by caricature, by scorn. These may exasperate the feelings, but they can never alter the convictions of the heart. And whenever I see employed against the truth, scorn, derision, caricature, I am tempted to suspect that

they who employ them are conscious they are in the wrong, for if they had mightier weapons they would unsheath them where a great and desirable object is to be attained. All these weapons are unfit and unsuitable in this warfare; they injure the cause they are meant to support, they rebound upon him that wields them. These gross weapons are fit for the work of a gross world; but they are unfit for that pure, that spiritual, that noble work which, consecrated by God himself, demands for its defence and its success, weapons that are not carnal, but mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan and of sin.

Having seen what are not proper weapons, let me show what are the proper weapons that we are to employ. If I want therefore to detach Micah from his gods, the victim of error from his errors, I must employ, in the first place, truth alone. You must not compromise the least essential truth, if it were to make a convert of the most influential or the greatest of the land. I would conciliate to the very verge of compromise; I would take care not to be uncharitable because I am uncompromising; but the truth, and the whole truth, and the truth in all its native grandeur, magnificence, and power, I must proclaim. And far better be disappointed by the rejection of your arguments to-day, than deceive to-day and see the disappointment when it is too late to correct it. How did our blessed Lord do when he told the disciples who were going forth into the world to spread his religion? Did he say, "Now you will find everything constituting an impulse to help you onward; friends will echo your sentiments, and converts gladly catch them"? No; he told them, "Bonds and imprisonment await you;"

that some would even think they did God service when they killed them ; and when it fared better the apostles were thankful, it could not be worse, therefore they were submissive ; but they never felt that they had been deceived, or urged upon a mission by prospects and motives that were not true or actual. In the second place, I will try to undeceive Micah, and make him a convert to the true and living religion, by the manifestation of that truth, which I must state in all its fulness, in love. Some people speak truth, but in a bitter spirit ; or if not in a bitter spirit, at least in an acrimonious style that leaves the impression that they have a bitter spirit ; it may be a misfortune in their mode of expressing themselves, not bitterness or irritability of heart and mind. We must therefore try to speak the truth, the most unpalatable truths, the most painful truths, but in the language and with the obvious feeling of genuine love. The wine is the truth ; the cup is the love in which you present that truth. And it is not in flesh and blood to resist an important truth, if it be spoken in the language of love, and by one who you can see not in pretence but in reality loves you and would do you good. And in the third place, we must try to take his gods from Micah, his false religion from him that loves it, by the presence, as I have already hinted, and the pressure of a better religion. Never try to extinguish the greatest error by the mere preaching against the results and the logical consequences of that error, without instantly, always, and everywhere following up the analysis of the error by the exhibition of that glorious gospel which has truth for its matter, and everlasting happiness for its issue. Do not take away his gods from Micah, or his.

priest from their altar, without showing him the living God, and the great High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ. Do not dislodge the error which is his all except by the truth which will fill the whole horizon of his mind, and occupy in his heart an affection, a love, and a weight that will make him thank you that the error he loved so dearly has been dissipated, and that the truth he did not know, or hated because unacquainted with its nature and its life, he has now received in all its simplicity and its fulness. I am persuaded that in all sermons that are preached on the subject of deadly error, in all lectures or addresses that are given upon the errors of others, one-fourth may be justly occupied in disproving the error, but three-fourths of the address must be consumed in applying to the error the great counteractive truths of the Gospel of Christ: and then he that loses his error by which he has been bewildered, will find, to his infinite joy, occupying its deserted shrine, a precious, saving, and sanctifying truth. When we try to undeceive others, and turn them from error, let us ever do it in the spirit of humble, heartfelt, believing prayer. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps; it is still less in the most powerful logician, or in the most eloquent orator, to alter savingly and for the greatest and most glorious purposes, the inveterate errors of the human mind. I know no character in speaking or preaching, more abhorrent than his who tries by satire, or by caricature, or by the keenness and brilliancy of his wit, to dislodge from a man's mind that religion which may be associated with all a mother's earliest lessons, which may be interwoven with the songs that he heard sung in his nursery,

which may have been his comfort when he lost the nearest, and the dearest, and the best beloved. Can you wonder that a man clings to that? Can you wonder that he will not give it up, dark, superstitious, corrupt as it may be, except under the compensatory force of something still brighter and still better? And when you speak to that man of his errors, speak tenderly to him, speak kindly of his errors; compromise not truth, yield not an inch in solemn and sacred duty as a minister, a preacher, a speaker of the truth; but show that it is not the man you hate, but his errors that you deplore; that you love him, and because you love him you would show him the more excellent way. And in order that this spirit may prevail within us, and may characterise us in all our efforts to enlighten and instruct others, let us pray that the Holy Spirit of God would convince the sinner of his sins, would convince the errorist of his errors; and when he has thus prepared the heart, our efforts will not need to be great or numerous in bringing the individual to see righteousness, and temperance, and judgment—all the blessings of our common and precious Christianity.

Having thus noticed first of all the important fact, that every man has a religion of some sort, that is his all, just as Micah could not live without his gods; secondly, that that religion is what dominates, guides, and constrains us in all life's trials, sorrows, duties, sacrifices; having tried to ascertain what may be in each of us our religion, what each then must ascertain for himself—for I can only suggest what may be, and press the inquiry that should be; having also seen that no religion that is not of God will stand, and that only a living religion that is of God will endure the

wear and tear, and waste and opposition of this present world; and having shown you, in the next place, what weapons ought not to be employed in trying to undeceive, and what holy and consecrated weapons, taken from the armoury of heaven, ought to be employed, if we would have any hope of success; let me ask you now, in conclusion, are you trusting in the Rock of ages? Are you leaning not upon the sand, that will all be shifted by the tide, or scattered by the winds, but upon that true and only foundation that is laid in Zion? Are you renouncing this day all gods, all priests, all idols, teraphim, and carved images, under whatever names they may be found in this nineteenth century, which has only changed the names, not very much the nature of the gods worshipped of old? Let me ask, are you resting upon any of these? Are you passing to the judgment-seat placing your eternal prospects upon some false and therefore fugitive delusion, and not upon this great truth, that He that knew no sin was made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God by him? My dear friends, your delusion may survive, what is very rare, the ordeal of this world; it may accompany you to that bed on which the strongest, and the youngest, and the oldest must one day lie down, and turn his face to the wall, and die; it may outlive the assaults of controversialists; it may defy the effects of time; it may stand the best sermons you ever heard, and retire impregnable from the ablest assaults that were ever made upon it; but an hour comes when it will have to go through an ordeal in which superstition cannot live, in which deception cannot endure; that ordeal is passing from

the last bed to the judgment-seat, where truth will be seen as it is, and no lie will even be pleaded, so completely shall it have perished in the passage from a sick bed to the tribunal of God. And if it be true, that none of us know what a day may bring forth; for the healthiest and strongest man this day may have in his heart what many a strong man has unsuspected in his heart—the fluttering, wasted, thin vessel which in an instant, and without a notice and without a warning, lays the shrine in ruins, and lets forth the living and the immortal Levite to the judgment-seat; if such be the case, what a terrible delusion—what an awful misapprehension of what we are—to leave to that moment, when there may be no time for thought, what should now be settled for ever; what we are, whither we are going, and what ground upon earth we have for believing that it will be well with us! These human faces, all reflecting what is within, are not what we shall meet at the judgment day. When the body dies, it is not the man that dies; each lays aside the robes in which he officiated in the temple below, that he may be clad in raiment white and clean, in order to officiate in a better temple above. And to suppose that this visible, audible framework is the man, is the greatest and the most grievous mistake. The soul, that which thinks, feels, knows, loves, which has what no animal has—a sense of responsibility that I can no more rid myself of than of my own immortality—that must appear naked at the judgment-seat of Christ; for at that day there will be no king, no subject, no noble, no plebeian, no priest, no layman; but some washed in that Saviour's precious blood, clad in

that Saviour's glorious robes, and others wakening to the terrible and bitter conviction that all is lost, and irretrievably lost. On which side, in which class shall we be? God knows. We may settle it; the blessing and the curse, heaven and hell, the gods of the heathen, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, are before us this day; choose ye. And oh, may the Spirit of God help us to make that choice, which is the preface to eternal joy, for Christ's sake! Amen.

JUDGES.

CHAPTERS XIX. XX. XXI.

THE last three or four chapters constitute an episode or an appendix properly attached to the Book of Judges, but perfectly distinct from the main story. I have passed by these as not being so fitted for public reading or for public edification, important in their place, and necessary as historic facts, linking together the past and the future history of the people of Israel. I take up first, chapter xix. At verse 8 we read, "They tarried until afternoon. Heb. עד נשח היום, *ad netoth hayom*, 'till the day declined.' The original for 'tarried' (החמאמחיהו *hithmahemehu*) implies a reluctant delay, a forced compliance with urgent solicitations, and the issue of the affair teaches us very impressively the danger, as well as the weakness of suffering ourselves to be overcome by pressing opportunity against the convictions of our better judgment. The hospitable entertainment and agreeable society of friends is indeed a strong inducement to protract a visit, but no man should forget that he has calls at home of paramount claim, and that there is a limit beyond which complaisance is at war with duty, and where we should turn a deaf ear to the most urgent requests. The warm-hearted and friendly entertainer,

too, should remember that his intended kindness when too far urged may prove a real injury to its objects, and should therefore moderate its promptings by reason and religion. It is altogether probable that the fearful calamity which overtook this unfortunate couple would have been avoided had they been less urged, or, when urged, they had acted with more decision."

In chapter xx. there is one verse worthy of remark. Chap. xx. 26. "'Went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept,' &c. Confounded by these repeated strokes of adverse providence, they are led at length to 'accomplish a more diligent search' into the true causes of the sad disaster which had befallen them. They see now that they had trusted too much to the goodness of their cause and the superiority of their numbers. They are now convinced that they ought to have begun at the outset with repentance and reformation, with solemn sacrifices and earnest supplications, instead of rushing forward with unhumbled hearts, reckless of their own apostasies, and prompted by a zeal for God in which was largely mingled the 'strange fire' of human resentment. The consequence is, that in deep affliction they now compass God's altar, abasing their souls under the sense of conscious guilt, rejecting every vain confidence, bewailing, not so much their losses as the unworthiness which had caused them, and devoutly imploring that aid which they had before so rashly taken for granted. This was the right method of procedure, and the happy fruits of their weeping and fasting begin at once to appear. Being brought to a proper frame of spirit they are prepared to receive the blessing, and the Most High

accordingly gives them positive assurance of success ; ‘Go up, for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand.’ Whenever a soul, in true humiliation, is brought low before God, the end of its calamities is at hand ; the day of deliverance has come.”

In closing these observations on the Book of Judges, let me notice what a remarkable history it presents ; what a blank would be in the annals of the past, if this book were expunged ; how many things should we be ignorant of which it instructs us in ; and how inexplicable would much of Heathen Mythology be if we had not the original source from which its traditions have drifted,—the inspired word of God ! We read, for instance, in the course of that book, of Jephthah, of his supposed, though, as I showed, falsely supposed, sacrifice of his daughter. This originated the story of Iphthygenia ; which, translated literally from the Greek, means the daughter or the descendant of Jephthah. Then we have the account of the foxes that Samson let loose among the fields of the Philistines ; we have there the rites of the Romans at the Feast of Ceres, where they did the very same thing ; evidently deriving the practice from the original record in this book. Samson himself is the original of Hercules and his labours. So that we can trace in this book the original ; and in the Mythology of ancient Greece and Rome, the traditional distortions of what were actual and historical facts.

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